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**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE IN BRADFORD
1863 - 1903**

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MPhil

2015

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE IN BRADFORD
1863 – 1903:
A STUDY USING SCHOOL
LOG BOOKS**

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**Submitted for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Life Sciences
University of Bradford**

2015

Abstract

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Elementary School Attendance in Bradford 1863-1903:

A Study Using School Log Books.

Keywords:

Education, Bradford, Log Books, School Attendance, Nineteenth Century.

This thesis examines the issue of elementary school attendance in later nineteenth century Bradford. It seeks to do this by means of a little used source: the school log book.

The focus of the study is on the experiences of head teachers who faced a constant struggle to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of attendance in Bradford where child employment in the flourishing textile industry had long been an inherent feature of working class life. It investigates broader issues affecting attendance in the context of prevailing social, cultural, religious, and economic factors.

While the significant and influential pressures on attendance in Bradford were to be found elsewhere (for example, parental apathy; hostility to compulsory attendance; child labour; health and welfare), this investigation discovers that the town's problems were compounded and made difficult by its phenomenal growth and rapid emergence by the middle of the nineteenth century as the undisputed capital of the world's worsted manufacturing trade.

It concludes that in the study of Victorian elementary school attendance Bradford deserves greater recognition in consideration of the tension between the demands of the most prolific half-time system of employment in the country, and prevailing attitudes to the introduction of universal elementary education in England and Wales.

Acknowledgements and Dedications

I thank sincerely Dr. Paul Jennings and Dr. George Sheeran of the University of Bradford for their help, guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the research and writing of this thesis.

I also thank members of staff at the J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford; Local Studies Department, Central Library, Bradford; West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford for their generous assistance and forbearance on the occasions of my many visits.

This study is dedicated especially to my late mother Sheila (1933-2014), and also to the remembrance of many generations of my forebears who experienced Bradford's pioneering education system.

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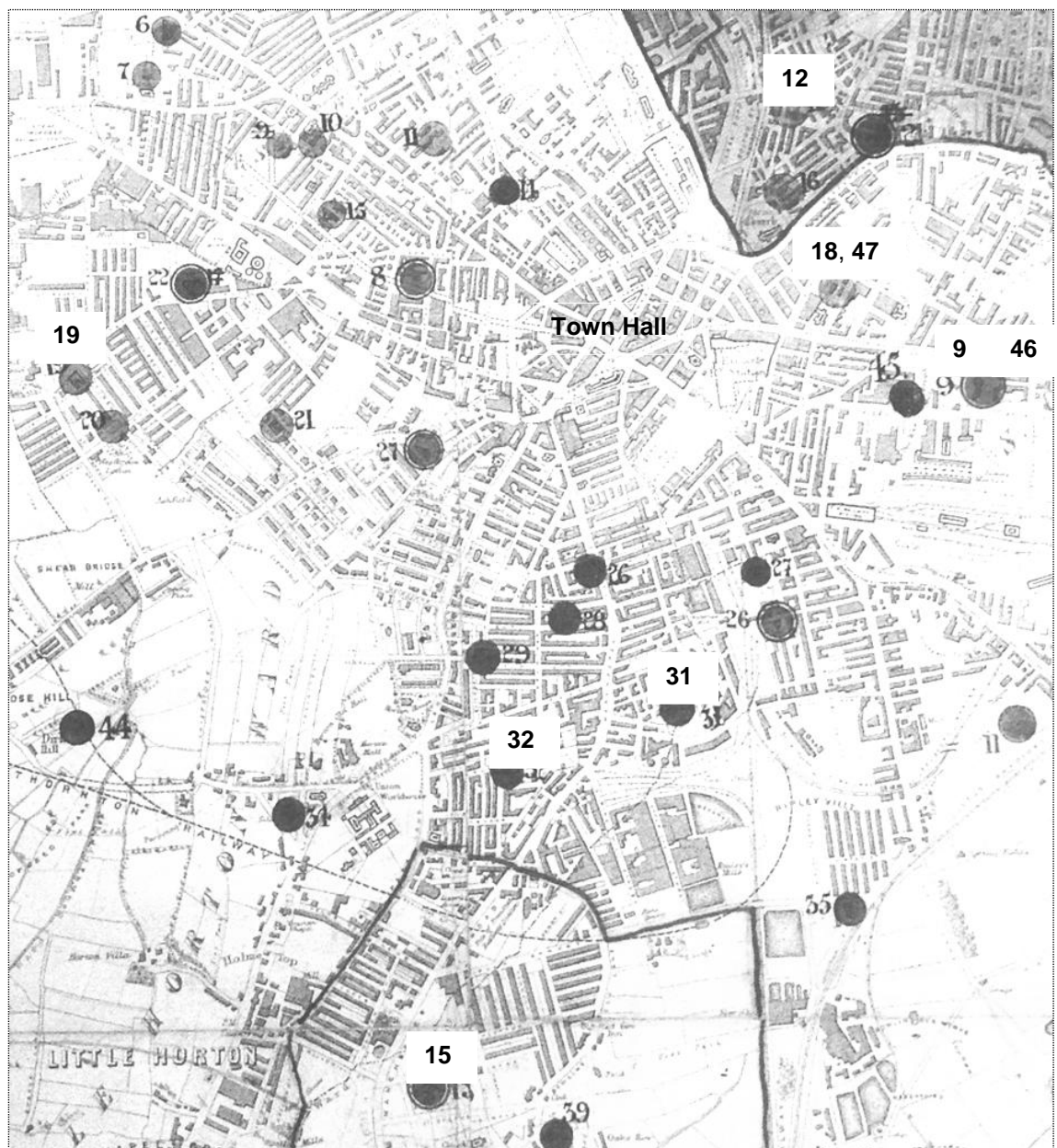
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Figure 1 - Town Plan of Central Bradford 1873 showing location of schools.



Source: National Archives, MR 1/1773

Figure 2 - Schools highlighted to identify log books referred to in thesis.

REFERENCE .	
BOARD SCHOOLS	DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS
1. Bolton Woods.	1 Bolton Church. <i>National</i>
2. Daisy Hill.	2. St. Pauls.
3. Lily Croft.	3. St. Philips. <i>Anglican</i>
4. Whelley Lane.	4. St. Augustine's.
5. Wapping Road.	5. St. Jude's.
6. Barkerend .	6. Abbey Road. <i>Westward</i>
7. Bradford Moor.	7. St. Michaels. <i>National</i>
8. Telley Street.	8. St. Philips. <i>Anglican</i>
* 9. Feversham Street.	9. Ragged Schools
10. Lidget Green.	10. St. Patrick's. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
* 11. Usher Street.	11. Christ Church. <i>National</i>
12. Bowling Back Lane.	* 12. Parish Church.
13. Great Horton. (Boys)	13. College Chapel
14. do do (Girls)	14. School of Industry
* 15. Ryan Street.	15. St. Thomas. <i>National</i>
16. Dudley Hill.	16. St. Mary's. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
17. Bank Top.	17. Lister Hills. Independent
18. Undercliffe.	* 18. Eastbrook. <i>Westward</i>
19. Princeville.	* 19. St. Andrews. <i>National</i>
20. Bell View.	20. do. do. Mission.
21. Chief Road.	21. Richmond Terr. <i>Westward</i>
22. Lister Hills.	22. Walkers & Co.
23. Muff Field.	23. Holy Trinity. <i>National</i>
24. Chapel Green.	24. St. Peter's. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
25. Great Horton. Junior & Infants.	25. Bradford Moor. Westward
26. Caledonia Street.	26. Model Factory. <i>National</i>
27. Horton Road.	27. St. Ann's. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
Not shown on original plan:	28. Borough West. <i>British</i>
* 46 New Leeds Infants' and	29. St. Joseph's. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
Mixed Board Schools (1873)	30. Lidget Green. National
* 47 Chapel Street Higher Grade	* 31. St. James.
Boys' Board School (1891)	* 32. Bramley Street.
	33. St. John's.
	34. All Saints.
	35. Ripley Ville. <i>British</i>
	36. Bierley. British
	37. Great Horton. <i>Westward</i>
	38. do. do. <i>National</i>
	39. St. Stephen's.
	40. Muff Field. <i>Westward</i>
	41. St. Stephen's. <i>Anglican</i>
	42. St. Matthews.
	43. St. Cuthberts. <i>Roman Catholic</i>
	44. All Saints. <i>Durham Mission National</i>
	* 45. Eastbrook Mills. <i>British</i>

Source: National Archives, MR 1/1773.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis investigates a key issue in the provision of elementary education in the later nineteenth century: the attendance of children at school. Its focus is the securing and maintenance of their regular attendance. It takes as its case study the industrial town of Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire where, for this investigation in particular, the incidence of child employment was more prevalent than anywhere else in England. Bradford's rapid and great growth to industrial prominence was a classic product of industrialisation and 'Worstedopolis' became known throughout the world as the centre of a vast trade in woollen and worsted goods. As Ittmann has observed of Bradford in the mid Victorian period, 'To understand that history is to understand much of what happened to England and the rest of the Western world in the course of the Industrial Revolution.'¹ The central source of this study is the school log book, inaugurated as a means of audit under the terms of the Revised Educational Code of 1862, which introduced the system of 'payment by results' for schools in receipt of financial support from the government. This in turn arose out of the Newcastle Commission's report of 1861, which had been charged with looking into ways of curbing rising public expenditure on elementary education.

On a personal note, the present study had its origins 45 years ago when, on 13 July 1970, I was taken by my history master at Hanson Boys' School, Bradford, to a gathering in the city's St. George's Hall to mark the launch of the book *Education in Bradford Since 1870*² commemorating the centenary of W. E. Forster's landmark legislation, the Elementary Education Act, 1870. It was there

¹ K. Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family in Victorian England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995), p. 1.

² *Education in Bradford Since 1870* (Bradford: Educational Services Committee Bradford Corporation, 1970).

that I learned of the existence of the school log book, the inimitable diary that all schools subject to government inspection had been required to maintain from the middle of the Victorian period. A thirst for these splendid and unique documents led me to compile over several years about a dozen popular local school histories using the log book as prime source material. It was evident that the incidence of poor attendance in school was a long-standing problem and I was interested to learn more about why teachers fought an apparently never ending battle to maintain an acceptable level of pupil numbers, and about the improbable and often long-forgotten reasons that conspired to prevent them from doing so. This suggested to me that detailed investigation into the subject using the log book as the primary source, an area hitherto neglected by historians, would prove fruitful, and the award of an honours degree in 2007 presented an opportunity for postgraduate research.

The debate surrounding the efficacy of introducing a universal system of elementary education gathered momentum throughout the nineteenth century. Increasingly controversial and debated both inside and outside Parliament, the most contentious issue surrounded the argument about whether church or state should have authority to deliver education to the masses. When at length legislation was passed in 1870, it was a careful compromise allowing religious bodies to continue their well-established work in educational provision while inaugurating a system of secular school boards to make available places where existing provision fell short.

The architect of the act was W. E. Forster, MP for Bradford, who was Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, although not a member of the Cabinet. His task was to persuade his fellow MPs that the time had arrived when they must sanction a system of universal elementary education for children in England and Wales. He had a number of credible arguments. The first was in promoting the country's future economic prosperity. He told the House of Commons, 'It is of no use trying to give technical teaching to our artisans without elementary education; uneducated labourers, are for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our work-folk any longer unskilled they will become overmatched in the competition of the world.' Secondly, and no doubt mindful of the extension of the franchise under the Reform Act of

1867, Forster spoke convincingly about the need to educate the new working class voters in order to safeguard the country's constitutional system. Thirdly, and perhaps most persuasively, he warned that the survival of Britain's political power rested on the speedy provision of a national system of elementary education. 'Civilised communities throughout the world are massing themselves together; and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world we must make up the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual.'³

Forster emphasised that the primary aim of his historic measure was to provide sufficient schools throughout the land to educate the children and to induce parents to send their offspring to them. The act stopped short of making attendance compulsory. There were compelling reasons for this: it was felt that public opinion needed time to accept such a radical policy, and that to coerce parents to send their child to school where there wasn't a place for him or her would bring discredit on the legislation. Voluntary schools resisted the proposal since they could not cope with the demand for places. The act instead gave the new regional school boards the power to introduce bye-laws compelling mandatory attendance where the number of places was sufficient to permit it. The Bradford School Board, formally constituted on 30 November 1870, considered that it had fulfilled its duties in this respect when, at the beginning of 1873, it brought in bye-laws to operate in those parts of the borough where the want of places had been made good by the opening of several temporary schools. The School Board could scarcely have envisaged the monumental task that lay before it. It is hoped that this study at the local level might contribute to a better understanding of why there was an apparently habitual resistance by a significant number of working class children to attend school.

'School attendance appears in numerous histories of education as a side-issue, essential but not central to the theme of developing school provision.'⁴

Sheldon's 2007 assessment of historical accounts about school attendance

³ Hansard, (HC), Third Series, vol. 199, cc. 465-6, 17 February 1870.

⁴ N. Sheldon, 'School Attendance 1880-1939: A Study of Policy and Practice in Response to the Problem of Truancy.' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2007), p. 29.

remains unchanged in 2015. A definitive study of the subject is yet to be written. Fortunately, the serious researcher can refer to many small-scale studies on disparate subjects associated with attendance to provide the foundations for such a work. For example, some useful research on attendance historiography nationally – generally focusing on urban areas – has been produced. Examples include articles by Pallister;⁵ Ellis;⁶ Elkington;⁷ and Rose⁸ whose perspectives on elementary school attendance embrace issues including parental and social attitudes, the labour market, religion, and welfare. Bradford too is an urban case study, but one with a particular interest in that around one third of its pupils, by far the highest number in the country, were half timers, providing an indispensable contribution to the labour force and the town's growing prosperity. In Bradford, the half timer was invariably a child aged eight (the age limitation progressively increased) or over who spent one half of the day in school and the other half in the textile mill. Consequently the tension between school and the prospering local industry threw up a number of issues surrounding, for example, the health and welfare of the pupil found asleep at his or her desk in the afternoon exhausted after toiling for six hours at the mill loom in the morning. The tentative hypothesis therefore appears to indicate above all else that the half-time system was at the root of Bradford's elementary school attendance problems, a phenomenon which is explored in this dissertation.

The focus of this study is on the school log book and on the head teacher, its custodian, whose writings reflect his or her perspectives about the attendance of pupils and the many assorted circumstances which affected their presence in or absence from the classroom. The problems associated with elementary school attendance in the nineteenth century were arguably nowhere more

⁵ R. Pallister, 'The Determinants of Elementary School Attendance About 1850.' *Durham Research Review* 23 (1969), pp. 384-98.

⁶ A. Ellis, 'Influences on School Attendance in Victorian England.' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 21 (1973), pp. 313-26.

⁷ T. Elkington, "The Insurmountable Evil": Problems of Attendance in Urban Elementary Schools During the First Decade of the Revised Code.' *History of Education Society. Bulletin* 51 (Spring 1993), pp. 8-19.

⁸ J. Rose, 'Willingly to School: The Working-Class Response to Elementary Education in Britain, 1875-1918.' *Journal of British Studies* 32 (1993), pp. 114-38.

pronounced than in Bradford. Two related phenomena combined inextricably to promote this – the very rapid and continual rise in population and the astonishing growth in manufacturing. The statistics are remarkable: between the censuses of 1801 and 1901 Bradford had transformed itself from a sparsely populated town of 6,393 inhabitants with one mill to a city with a population that had multiplied more than forty fold⁹ and had several hundred mills and associated industries. By any standards this growth in people and manufacturing was extraordinary. To put this in perspective Bradford was the twenty-fifth largest provincial town in England at the time of the incorporation of the borough in 1847 by the amalgamation of the townships of Bradford, Horton, Bowling, and Manningham. In 1851, as Jowitt has asserted, not only had Bradford become the seventh largest urban area in England and Wales, but it was recognised as the undisputed capital of the world's textile manufacture, its growth being built 'almost entirely on the mechanisation, expansion and concentration of worsted textiles.'¹⁰ In 1897, Queen Victoria elevated Bradford to the status of city, and by 1901 Bradford's geographical area, which had expanded over the years to incorporate several more townships, embraced a population of 279,767.¹¹ The plentiful supply of child labour assisted greatly in this unparalleled rise, and the increasingly passionate efforts by the Bradford School Board to balance the demands of local commerce with the necessity to enforce regular attendance in the classroom are well documented in the school log books.

But there were many influences and variables in patterns of behaviour that conspired to affect the regularity of school attendance. Parental indifference is much in evidence. Instances both of those parents who were determined not to send their children to school on any account and those who made every effort to make sure that their sons and daughters attended regularly are to be found in abundance. In every school log book there is also much to support the

⁹ B. Duckett and J. Waddington-Feather, *Bradford History and Guide* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), p. 67.

¹⁰ T. Jowitt, 'A Review of Recent Writing on the History of the Town.' In D. Wright and J. Jowitt (eds.) *Victorian Bradford: Essays in Honour of Jack Reynolds* (Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, Libraries Division, 1982), pp. 245-56, p. 245.

¹¹ Duckett and Waddington-Feather, *History and Guide*, p. 67.

hypothesis that pupils were apathetic about school and in some cases altogether hostile to it. The log books reveal that innumerable factors acted to reduce the attendance including the demands of employers, the frequency of local 'tides' and fairs, the state of the weather, the prevalence of disease and poverty, the high incidence of the undernourished pupil, want of adequate clothing and footwear, fear of punishment, 'overpressure' through the imposition of homework, and even the staging of political rallies.

This thesis is based on information contained in twenty two log books kept by the head teachers of several schools in the centre of Bradford during the period 1863 to 1903. (The former year saw the introduction of the log book, and the latter year witnessed the end nationally of the school board era). Some of the records are in the custody of the West Yorkshire (Bradford Division) Archive Service; a few remain with the schools; and others came into my possession following the closure of two schools at a time when my interest in the history of local education was publicised (these will be deposited with the Bradford district archivist in due course).

At the outset of my research for this thesis the paucity of information on the subject of school records, and of log books in particular, quickly became apparent. Gadd, in a detailed examination of the early log books of Northam National Schools, Southampton, commends to the historian the value of such records in his study set in the context of local and national events in the mid Victorian period.¹² However, there appeared to be no definitive guidance about how to approach the question of systematically extracting and cataloguing information from the log books. A paper by Taylor¹³ concerning the attendance of children in a Victorian village school afforded some suggestions by demonstrating the way in which the author had approached the task of correlating log book entries to provide a study of attendance figures, and to highlight the major reasons for absence. I considered how I could expand upon this method to devise one which might provide a structured approach and the

¹² E. Gadd, *Victorian Logs* (Studley: Brewin, 1979).

¹³ S. Taylor, 'Bell, Book and Scandal: The Struggle for School Attendance in a South Cambridgeshire Village 1880-1890.' *Family and Community History*, vol. 1, (November 1998), pp. 71-84.

ability to develop my own in-depth analysis of the material. I achieved this by using a series of reasonably detailed log books from Feversham Street Board School, Bradford, dating from 1873 (when it was inaugurated as the New Leeds Board School) to 1903, during which time the several departments of the school went through many changes in constitution and nomenclature. From very close examination of these long neglected documents I was able to discern the frequency of and importance attached to recording attendance, and the myriad of reasons for doing so. In addition, I made copious notes relating not only to attendance patterns, but also to all other matters that, however remotely, appeared to impact both negatively and favourably upon the attendance of the pupils.

From this sample review, I determined that the most useful way in which to record the information contained in about eight thousand handwritten pages of the many school log books examined in this study was to devise a small number of categories and a referencing system into which I might place information relevant to the subject of attendance. These categories were suggested by the frequency with which certain aspects of attendance dominated:- 'Child Labour Versus Education'; 'Parental Attitudes'; 'Outside Influences'; 'Punishment'; 'Behaviour'; and 'Revised Code Versus Expanding Curriculum'. A 'catch all' classification, where items fitted into none of the others, was labelled quite simply 'Attendance' and this contained the most information by far. Each log book was assigned a number and this together with the log book page number and a brief description of the entry provided the straightforward reference code. Under *Attendance* an example is: *5/62 Mill boys & the Act – won't att. sch.* The figure 5 relates to volume one of the St. James's Boys' School log book series; 62 is the page number; and the full citation is, 'Some boys from Messrs. Mitchell and Shepherd's away as the engine had broken down. Mill-boys do not appear to consider it their duty to be at school when there is no work at the mill; the act does not force them, and they will have no more schooling than the act provides for.' As the writing progressed I continually searched and reviewed the collected information. Around twenty per cent of the material has found a place in this study.

Article 56 of the Revised Code of 1862 stated that the log book must contain no fewer than 500 ruled pages (a requirement that was reduced to 300 pages by the time of the 1892-93 Code), and it would take on average about 35 years and sometimes several thousand entries to complete that number of pages. Together these log books provide a wide cross section of the manner in which a large number of head teachers chose to maintain the official testimony of life in their school as they perceived it should be recorded. Therefore some log books revealed a wealth of useful information within the space of a few pages, while others contained nothing of significance in several hundred pages. The handwriting in the majority of log books was perfectly legible, but in rare instances it was hardly discernible, and in some cases the ink had faded badly. The log books used in this thesis relate primarily to a small geographical area concentrating on that which might be described as 'old Bradford' (see Figures 1 and 2, pp. viii-ix).

The structure of the thesis is as follows: - Chapter 2 traces the emergence of working class elementary education in the nineteenth century with particular reference to Bradford and the social and historical development of the town. It examines the recent historiography of research in the subject of elementary school attendance in the second half of the nineteenth century and the influences which promoted irregularity. Chapter 3 looks critically at the primary and wider source material consulted and used in the preparation of the thesis. It comments in detail about the origin and purpose of the log book while promoting its usefulness as an historical document in helping to expand existing knowledge about aspects of Victorian elementary school attendance, and about the potential for discovering new perspectives on nineteenth century educational, social, and cultural interests. Chapter 4 explores the relentless fight to secure attendance in Bradford, and in the national context. Chapter 5 draws out the information contained in the log books to highlight the difficulties that were endemic throughout the country and those which were peculiar to Bradford in the battle to secure and maintain good attendance in elementary schools. The thesis concludes with Chapter 6 which reviews briefly the reasons for poor attendance, and argues that Bradford deserves to be looked upon as a

special case in attempting to understand the wider debate about why Victorian elementary school children were apparently reluctant to attend to their lessons with regularity.

Chapter 2

The Education of the People

By the beginning of the nineteenth century an awakening interest in the education of the labouring classes becomes quite discernible. But the battle to secure what Henry Brougham, a leading Whig politician, referred to as *the education of the people*¹⁴ was one which would be both long and hard fought. This chapter examines the major developments both nationally and at local level in Bradford that paved the way for the establishment of the Elementary Education Act of 1870. The act might justifiably claim to be among the most important pieces of legislation during that century. This chapter discusses also the historiography of universal elementary education and in particular that on school attendance.

2.1 Historiography.

The centenary of the 1870 Elementary Education Act gave rise to renewed academic interest in the history of education in England and Wales. The attention of many scholars centred on specific areas of concern, predominantly class (with particular interest in the working-class response), socialisation, state control, and policy making. The debates in recent times have moved on to embrace key themes primarily about gender, culture, identity, race, and ethnicity. In addition there has been a discernible expanding interest in 'history from below', first-hand experiences of those actual recipients of the pioneering days of elementary education.

For much of the first part of the twentieth century there was little scholarly interest in the history of elementary education. This is understandable since it

¹⁴ H. Brougham, *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People, Addressed to the Working Classes and their Employers* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825).

was perceived as a modern concept and the story was in the process of unfolding. However, two books by former inspectors of schools give contrasting insights into the ways in which elementary education had developed since the middle of the nineteenth century. The first is a thoroughly detailed, though rambling, semi-autobiographical account by Edmund Sneyd-Kynnersley,¹⁵ published in 1910, about aspects of his long career. It is useful in that it provides an intimate and detailed first-hand account of his relationships with everyone involved in the provision of education from high and distant officials in the Education Department to school board members, school managers, and the children themselves. However, the historian should treat the book with a measure of scepticism since the author's unmistakable aim throughout was to keep the reader entertained and amused. Sneyd-Kynnersley dedicated his book to Edmond Holmes, the author of the second work worthy of examination.¹⁶ Holmes wrote passionately about his observations on how the development of elementary education had been strangled by the 'false standards and false ideals of Western civilisation' foremost among which he placed 'that deadly system of payment by results.' He also offered his opinions on how education might in future translate into a more utopian ideal. As chief inspector of elementary schools 1905-1911, Holmes was well placed to set forth his views, and his commentary is astute and sober though necessarily partial.

Smith's book, *A History of English Elementary Education 1760-1902*¹⁷ was for 40 years, following its publication in 1931, the authoritative work. Robson published in the same year a less well known work but one of equal merit entitled, *The Education of Children Engaged in Industry in England, 1833-1876*.¹⁸ Both are classic reference books offering valuable insights into their respective subjects and might be looked upon, even today, as the starting point for anyone interested in tracing the development of elementary education, and the working child. Much later, as a prelude to the commemoration of the

¹⁵ E. Sneyd-Kynnersley, *H.M.I. Some Passages in the Life of One of H.M. Inspectors of Schools* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1910).

¹⁶ E. Holmes, *What Is And What Might Be* (London: Constable and Co, 1911).

¹⁷ F. Smith, *A History of English Elementary Education 1760-1902* (London: London University Press, 1931).

¹⁸ A. Robson, *The Education of Children Engaged in Industry in England 1833-1876* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1931).

centenary of universal elementary education, Sturt was the first to publish a significant and detailed study on the subject. In *The Education of the People*,¹⁹ she took a fresh look at the development of working class education, concentrating in particular on socialisation and the significance of subordination as a means of keeping the 'lower orders' in check.

Academic interest in the subject was understandably awakened by the centenary of the Elementary Education Act in 1970. Further, that year saw a number of activities taking place nationally to commemorate Forster's historic measure which introduced 'education for all'. Nowhere, perhaps, were celebrations of that important event more apparent than in Bradford, Yorkshire where W. E. Forster served as Liberal Member of Parliament from 1861 to 1886. The collaborative efforts of many local people – teachers, academics, historians, municipal administrators – culminated in the book, *Education in Bradford Since 1870* (alluded to in Chapter 1), which was the city's contribution to a plethora of publications relating to the origin and development of the education of the people. The book did not pretend to be a serious academic study. Its purpose was to recount and record significant events in the city's educational development from the early nineteenth century up to 1970. Notwithstanding, it was and remains the concise reference work for any kind of research into Bradford's educational history, and a guide to how similar studies might be attempted elsewhere.

In 1970, Wardle was moved to write, 'The history of education is in a very backward state compared with most other fields of historical study. The facts relating to the development of English education are known in a general way, although there is a depressing shortage of good detailed local studies against which to check the more general works.'²⁰ Wardle repeated his assessment on the state of research into the history of education in the revision of his book which was published in 1976. By that time his statement was open to challenge

¹⁹ M. Sturt, *The Education of the People. A History of Primary Education in England and Wales in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

²⁰ D. Wardle, *English Popular Education 1780-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. viii. (Revised: *English Popular Education 1780-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)).

since several specific studies into aspects of the history of education had been written in the five year period between 1970 and 1975. Many of these were produced by the Cambridge University Press in the series *Cambridge Texts and Studies in the History of Education*. For example, Bishop mapped in detail the growth during the nineteenth century of the Education Department;²¹ Roach traced the origins of the modern English examination system in the second half of the nineteenth century;²² and Sylvester argued the case for a reassessment of Robert Lowe's 'reactionary reputation'.²³ Elsewhere Murphy, in addition to evaluating 'the complicated history of the religious question in British education' during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,²⁴ produced a reappraisal of the 1870 Education Act in the context of the prevailing social and religious atmosphere and debates within and outside Parliament;²⁵ and Wardle himself examined the history of formal schooling in England.²⁶ What is not open to dispute, however, is Wardle's opinion about a dearth at that time of detailed local studies which might add significantly to the value of 'more general works'. Wardle himself sought to redress the balance in a study (in the *Cambridge Texts* series) of the progress made in the provision of education during the nineteenth century in Nottingham. His stated aim was 'to suggest possible points of contrast between the findings of a specific local study and those revealed by the history of education in the country as a whole.'²⁷ Simon, the educationist and author on the study of the history of education, observed in his preface to the Silvers' account of the 150 year history of a National school in Kennington that 'literally thousands of elementary schools were founded during the nineteenth century, yet there is scarcely a published history of a single one

²¹ A. Bishop, *The Rise of a Central Authority for English Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

²² J. Roach, *Public Examinations in England 1850-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

²³ D. Sylvester, *Robert Lowe and Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

²⁴ J. Murphy, *Church, State and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

²⁵ J. Murphy, *The Education Act 1870. Text and Commentary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972).

²⁶ D. Wardle, *The Rise of the Schooled Society. The History of Formal Schooling in England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

²⁷ D. Wardle, *Education and Society in Nineteenth-Century Nottingham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

of them.²⁸

Importantly too, an emphasis on the effect of compulsory education on family life was debated by Hurt in *Education in Evolution, Church, State, Society and Popular Education, 1800-1870*,²⁹ and in *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918*.³⁰ Rose, in his article 'Willingly to School: The Working-Class Response to Elementary Education in Britain, 1875-1918',³¹ revisited and built on observations made by Burnett, Vincent and Mayall (eds.) in *The Autobiography of the Working Class (1984-1989)*,³² and by Thompson (founder of The Oral History Society in 1971), in *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society*,³³ both of which explore elementary education from the consumers' viewpoint by way of personal recollections. In the meantime, educational historians and others have been ruminating on 'the new history'—that is developments in the methodology and practice of history. The topic has been widely debated among practitioners in the United States. Hiner, for example, has observed that 'The most striking characteristic of the new history of education is its growing inclusiveness. Like the new social historians, historians of education now give greater attention to topics such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, and region.'³⁴

The early narrative on educational historiography progressed from studies on class, family and socialisation, reflecting wider historical concerns, to issues surrounding the consumers' perspective, and then to matters associated with

²⁸ P. and H. Silver, *The Education of the Poor. The History of a National School 1824-1974* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

²⁹ J. Hurt, *Education in Evolution. Church, State, Society and Popular Education 1800-1870* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971).

³⁰ J. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

³¹ Rose, 'Willingly to School', pp. 114-38.

³² J. Burnett, D. Vincent, D. Mayall (eds.) *The Autobiography of the Working Class* (New York: New York University Press, 3 vols, 1984-1989).

³³ P. Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975. Revised 1992).

³⁴ N. Hiner, 'History of Education for the 1990s and Beyond: The Case for Academic Imperialism.' *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 2, (1990), pp. 137-60, p. 144.

gender, race, ethnicity, and identity, also reflecting changing concerns in the discipline of history.

More recently, the focus of interest has shifted once again to encompass ideas about how the elementary school child was subtly influenced about notions of 'Englishness', 'Empire', and 'National Identity'. Heathorn³⁵ argues that the part played by the schoolroom in the promotion of identity, nationhood, citizenship, and so on, and the role which one was expected to play, were essential for the future security and stability of the country. Romantic notions about 'our homeland', 'our duties and responsibilities', and 'the motherland' were promoted by middle class writers of school 'readers' to support the future defence and preservation of the realm, and it was considered imperative that these idealistic sentiments be firmly implanted at the earliest opportunity in the minds of those who would in time contribute to such honourable aspirations. This theme was continued by Yeandle who contributed to the debate by identifying attempts to promote an imperial-national sense of identity in the elementary school 'readers'. He argues that such books 'articulated a message about nationhood and belonging that was intended to serve a purpose [namely] to imbibe middle class values of duty and sacrifice to the working classes [which was] akin to representations in textbooks of the mission to 'civilise' the 'native', the 'heathen' and the 'barbarian'.'³⁶

In 2007, Crook and McCulloch edited a widely acclaimed book entitled, *History, Politics and Policy-making in Education. A festschrift presented to Richard Aldrich*.³⁷ Written in honour of Aldrich, an educational historian, the book focuses on understanding current educational issues in the context of historical dialogues with contributions on motherhood, gender, race, national security, and the teaching of reading.

³⁵ S. Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000).

³⁶ P. Yeandle, 'Empire, Englishness and Elementary School History Education, c. 1880-1914'. *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 3, (2003), pp. 59-72, p. 68.

³⁷ D. Crook, G. McCulloch, *History, Politics and Policy-making in Education. A festschrift presented to Richard Aldrich* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2007).

More specifically, the subject of elementary school attendance in Victorian times was the theme of several academic papers in the 30 years or so up to the turn of the century. Pallister³⁸ considered employment, religious influences, and health, concluding that by the middle of the nineteenth century a pattern had emerged. 'By far the most significant underlying determinant of attendance was the prevailing attitude of parents towards what was given in schools at that time in the name of education, in comparison with what could be gained by keeping the child away from school.'³⁹ Elkington⁴⁰ examined school attendance and the efforts of teachers to secure it in four northern industrial cities in the wake of the Revised Code of 1862, arguing convincingly that growing opportunities for child employment, poverty, and 'unbending parental apathy' militated against regularity.⁴¹ A paper by Ellis,⁴² in which he makes use of considerable statistical data to examine social, economic and other factors, unsurprisingly confirms what others have found, namely that parental apathy was the most common cause of educational neglect, and that common factors such as poverty, health, 'overpressure' of work in schools, migration, disease, and weather were all causes of irregular attendance. However, Ellis rightly observes that 'in the provision of educational facilities and in the attendance of children at school, the most significant developments took place prior to 1870, and that the remaining three decades of the century were devoted to an incomplete consolidation of the position.' He argues that it took much less effort to attract the 50 per cent of children who were on school registers before 1870 than it did to gain the additional 30 per cent between 1870 and 1885, a matter he concludes was due largely to carelessness in drafting relevant legislation,⁴³ an allusion perhaps to the disparities existing between the criteria for child employment contained in the Factory and Education Acts. For her investigation into the reasons for irregular attendance in a 'specific rural area' – that of Steeple Morden in Cambridgeshire - in the decade 1880 to 1890 (the Education Act of 1880 introduced compulsory elementary education for children up to ten years of

³⁸ Pallister, 'Determinants', pp. 384-98.

³⁹ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 395.

⁴⁰ Elkington, 'The Insurmountable Evil', pp. 8-19.

⁴¹ Elkington, 'The Insurmountable Evil', p. 16.

⁴² Ellis, 'Influences', pp. 313-26.

⁴³ Ellis, 'Influences', pp. 324-5.

age), Taylor⁴⁴ uses as her primary research resource the log book of the village school. She identifies the main reason for irregular attendance in that community as 'the struggle between a progressive state with its 'modern' disciplines of regularity and punctuality, and a 'traditional' rural way of life; and the effects it had on families and individuals alike.'⁴⁵

Many general and local studies about children and child employment have been written in recent times. E. and R. Frow⁴⁶ provide a useful and concise insight into the half-time system and the struggle during the latter part of the nineteenth century between teachers who opposed it and northern textile unions who promoted it. The tensions surrounded what was seen as the abuse of children through work, and their indispensable source of cheap labour in the mills and factories. Kirby⁴⁷ argues that 'until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, demand for formal schooling remained low because its economic benefits did not outweigh its costs.' He maintains that between the 1870s and 1890s 'the continuing fall in demand for child workers and the introduction of free schooling tended to remove the problem of lost earnings.'⁴⁸ *Working Children in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* edited by Winstanley⁴⁹ is a book researched by undergraduate students of history at Lancaster University (under the supervision of Winstanley) which addresses some of the national debates surrounding child labour and the concept of childhood in a localised context during 'the progressive development of the world's first industrialised society.' These studies explore the employment of boys and girls in various local occupations, including those that were considered appropriate to their gender. In his conclusion, Winstanley highlights persistent contemporary debates about the 'erosion of childhood' when compared with 'an uncomplicated golden age not so long ago when children *were* children, families were united and happy,

⁴⁴ Taylor, 'Bell, Book and Scandal', pp. 71-84.

⁴⁵ Taylor, 'Bell, Book and Scandal', p. 83.

⁴⁶ E. and R. Frow, *A Survey of the Half-time System in Education* (Manchester: E. J. Morten, 1970).

⁴⁷ P. Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴⁸ Kirby, *Child Labour*, p. 119.

⁴⁹ M. Winstanley (ed.), *Working Children in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1995).

and moral standards were universally adhered to.’ He observes that ‘historians are sceptical of idealised views of the past’, and argues that ‘our modern concept of ‘childhood’ is, to all intents and purposes, a recent construction and not one which would have been recognised by previous generations.’ He is hopeful that his work will not only question these assumptions, but will inspire further research on the matter.⁵⁰ A well researched book by Mercer⁵¹ uses local sources to demonstrate how neighbourhood influences shaped the development of elementary education. Mercer re-appraises the view that the voluntary and private adventure schools which flourished prior to the act of 1870 were of little consequence, observing that ‘their sustained approval fed by ‘currents of alternative culture’ was an implicit rejection of formal public schooling’, and he argues convincingly the notion that ‘throughout the nineteenth century the uncoordinated voluntary schools had developed as social, religious and educational agencies alongside the poorer sections of the community.’⁵²

In wider areas of academic educational historiography a number of diverse topics have been highlighted as the subject of investigation. For example, Gillian Sutherland contributed significantly to the subject in over 40 years of research and writing. Her book *Policy-Making in Elementary Education*,⁵³ published four decades ago, is unsurpassed as a perceptive study into the manner in which policy evolved over 25 years in the creation of a national school system following the Forster Act. Dinah Birch presents a complex study about the enduring influence in the twenty first century of nineteenth century ideas about teaching and learning with a particular perspective on literary sources.⁵⁴ A hitherto neglected aspect in the development and promotion of elementary education in the nineteenth century is to be found in the significant role played by clergymen. In his definitive book, published in 2009, John Smith explores in great detail the often complex and conflicting relationship between

⁵⁰ Winstanley (ed.), *Working Children*, pp. 138-40.

⁵¹ M. Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child. Elementary Education in Sheffield 1560-1902* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁵² Mercer, *Schooling*, pp. 294 and 299.

⁵³ G. Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870-1895* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁵⁴ D. Birch, *Our Victorian Education* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

clergy and teachers as the latter grew in stature and the once overriding and powerful influence of the former gradually diminished.⁵⁵

In addition to the academic literature, there has also been a range of good local work by schools and others arising out of the one hundredth anniversary of the Forster Act. Fittingly, Bradford was to the forefront when, in 1966, the decision was taken to commemorate the historic legislation. In anticipation of the centenary of the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 it was agreed that a team of teachers and other members of the education service should get together to write up the story of the development of education in the city. One of the duties of the co-ordinating committee was to publish from time to time a typescript bulletin to raise awareness and maintain interest in the project; to document the work in progress; and to publish articles on aspects of local educational history.⁵⁶ These articles, numbering about 45, were the first co-ordinated attempt to tell the story of how education in Bradford had developed, and many of them were written by retired teachers whose careers had begun under the school board. For example, Robertshaw⁵⁷ recalled vividly her time as a pupil at Whetley Lane Infants' and Junior, and at Belle Vue Girls' Higher Grade Board Schools; her experiences as a pupil teacher; and some of the characters synonymous with education in Bradford during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Following the publication of the book *Education in Bradford Since 1870*, the co-ordinating committee was reinvented in the guise of *The Forster Society*, and several annual typescript pamphlets were issued which continued the theme of the earlier bulletins.⁵⁸ Although the society was only short lived, it succeeded for a time in maintaining the widespread interest that had been generated by the centenary celebrations. Many local schools have taken the opportunity to

⁵⁵ J. Smith, 'A Victorian Class Conflict?': *Schoolteaching and the Parson, Priest and Minister, 1837-1902* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ *History of Education in Bradford 1870-1970*, bulletins 1-5 (Bradford: Privately published, October 1967 - May 1970).

⁵⁷ P. Robertshaw, 'Early School Days in Bradford, 1891-1901.' In *History of Education in Bradford 1870-1970*, bulletin 2, (April 1968), pp. 34-6.

⁵⁸ *Forster Bulletin*. Journal of the Forster Society, 1-3. (Bradford: Privately published, May 1971 - May 1973). Two further editions (4 and 5 in 1975 and 1976 respectively) were devoted to subjects unrelated to education.

research their own histories and to publish often detailed accounts.⁵⁹ In some cases these have been enhanced by the oral and written reports of former pupils and teachers about their first-hand experiences of schooling in the twentieth century. In all such studies schools have been able to make widespread use of readily available archive material in the form of log books, admission registers, and punishment journals, and in every case these records have highlighted one particular issue above all others: the question of attendance.

2.2 The Education of the People.

Henry Brougham's phrase 'The Education of the People', which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter of the same name, is a term which was commonly used in nineteenth century parlance to refer to the means of providing and of sustaining a national system for the education of the working classes. It first came to prominence in 1825 when, using the expression in the title, Brougham published his widely read *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People Addressed to the Working Classes and their Employers*. It can be found in the writings and speeches of Parliamentarians such as John Stuart Mill,⁶⁰ and Benjamin Disraeli.⁶¹ It was a phrase used by the Newcastle Commission,⁶² and by the school inspector Matthew Arnold.⁶³ In

⁵⁹ For example: C. Metcalfe, (ed.) *Hanson Boys' School 1897-1972* (Bradford: Privately published, 1972); J. Jackson, *Thorpe School, Idle, Bradford, 1884-1984* (Bradford: Watmoughs, 1984); J. Jackson, *Sandal School (Baildon). A History* (Baildon: Privately published, 1994); M. and D. Warwick, *Our Schools. A History of Schools in Burley-in-Wharfedale* (Burley-in-Wharfedale: Burley-in-Wharfedale Local History Publications, 1998).

⁶⁰ J. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: J. W. Parker and Son, 1859).

⁶¹ B. Disraeli, 'Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends.' Speech House of Commons, 15 July 1874. Hansard, (HC), Third Series, vol. 219, col. 1618.

⁶² *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the State of Popular Education in England, 1861*. Popularly known as the Newcastle Commission and The Newcastle Report.

⁶³ P. Smith and J. Summerfield, *Matthew Arnold and the Education of the New Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 197. This book contains a selection of Arnold's writings on education with commentary by the authors. The reference is from 'The Twice-Revised Code' (originally published in *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. LXV, March 1862) in which Arnold

1967, Mary Sturt employed it in the title of her critically acclaimed book on the history of primary education in England and Wales in the nineteenth century, which is referred to in Chapter 1. More recently Nancy Ball examined the part played in the development of elementary education by the early Victorian voluntary schools in her book, *Educating The People*.⁶⁴ However, the term may have been adapted from an article by James Mill (the father of John Stuart Mill, philosopher and political economist) who in 1824 wrote about favouring the education of the *middle* classes. In denouncing the supremacy of the aristocratic ruling class, Mill called for social and political transformation through promotion to power of the growing middle classes. 'The proper education of this portion of the people', Mill advocated, 'is of the greatest possible importance to the wellbeing of the state.'⁶⁵

2.3 Early Developments.

General popular education in England might tenuously claim to have its origins in the earliest Anglican charity schools established at the beginning of the eighteenth century under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. However, as the result of lukewarm interest by the public; difficulties in maintaining adequate funding; the Society's increasing work overseas; and in its publication of literature, it became apparent that 'as a general means of educating the people, the movement had clearly failed.'⁶⁶ There can be no doubt that the Sunday school movement, which became prominent and very active towards the end of the eighteenth century, can lay a more acceptable and valid claim to be the instigator of widespread elementary education.⁶⁷ In addition to teaching the gospel, Sunday schools throughout the kingdom acted also as moral agencies to save young people from the path of unruliness, vice, drunkenness, and other evils to which they were often exposed

denounced The Revised Code of 1862, concluding 'And there will be only one sufferer; - *the education of the people.*'

⁶⁴ N. Ball, *Educating The People. A Documentary History of Elementary Schooling in England 1840-1870* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1983).

⁶⁵ *Westminster Review*, vol. 1, January 1824, pp. 68-9.

⁶⁶ Ball, *Educating The People*, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 24; Murphy, *Church, State and Schools*, p. 4; Mercer, *Schooling*, p. 68.

– or at least perceived by their social superiors to be exposed. Evangelical adherents in particular considered children to be most out of control on Sundays and even a danger to society on the one day when they were not at work.⁶⁸ The founding of the national Sunday school movement is attributed to Robert Raikes⁶⁹ (1735-1811), editor of the *Gloucester Journal*, who, in 1780, opened the first institution to receive formal recognition as a Sunday school. One of its key functions was to divert local slum children from idleness and criminal activity by means of bible instruction and tuition in reading and writing. While Raikes is recognised as the pioneer of the Sunday school as a national association, similar establishments had been operating much earlier in most towns and cities throughout the kingdom.⁷⁰

Parliamentary interest in the education of the ‘lower orders’ during the early part of the nineteenth century developed slowly as the customary attitude of the middle classes shifted gradually from one of fearing the adverse consequences of mass literacy to one of accepting that without it the prevailing social order might be in danger of collapse. As Sanderson has observed, ‘This was the essential dilemma: whether to deny education to the poor and so avoid trouble, or whether to provide ample education in the hope that it would serve as an agency of social control.’⁷¹ But progress was slow. The universal education of the people came with the Elementary Education Act of 1870; seven decades after the idea had first been raised in Parliament.

The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802 was designed to tackle the worst excesses imposed upon children and young adults engaged primarily in the mushrooming cotton and textile factories. Among its provisions was the requirement that employers must provide facilities for instructing children and young people for the first four years of their apprenticeship in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. This initial attempt by the government to reform

⁶⁸ H. Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), pp. 130-1.

⁶⁹ For further information about the life and work of Robert Raikes see J. Power, *The Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools. A Biography of Robert Raikes and William Fox* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1863).

⁷⁰ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, pp. 48-51.

⁷¹ M. Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 12.

working conditions was the first time it had taken interest in providing any form of elementary education. 'The Act may therefore be regarded as the first Education Act of the century, and the first assault on the theory of *laissez faire*.'⁷²

In 1807, the first substantive attempt to interest the government in what he called 'a scheme for general national education' was made by Samuel Whitbread MP. In promoting a bill to revise the poor law system Whitbread proposed, as a means of easing the increasing financial burden of pauperism and reducing the incidence of crime, that every child between the ages of seven and fourteen should have two years education under the supervision of their parish. Attendance in parochial schools was to be voluntary, but Whitbread entertained the hope that 'it will soon so work its way that every man in England and Wales will feel it a disgrace not to have his children instructed.'⁷³ His ideas did not meet with the approval of many of his fellow MPs, of whom Davies Giddy was one. Giddy, who changed his surname to Gilbert in 1817, was a Member of Parliament between 1804 and 1832. He was a writer and scientist and president of the Royal Society of Science, 1827-1830. Giddy stated vociferously:

For, however specious in theory the project might be, of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors and, in a few years, the result would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them, and to

⁷² Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 107.

⁷³ Hansard, (HC), 1807, viii, 865, 19 February 1807.

furnish the executive magistrates with much more vigorous laws than were now in force.⁷⁴

Against such opposition Whitbread's bill foundered.

In 1808 and in 1811, two important voluntary organisations were formed nationally to advance specifically the education of the poorer classes. The first was *The Society for Promoting the Lancasterian System for the Education of the Poor* or, as it was better known, *The Royal Lancasterian Society*. It was founded by evangelical nonconformist Christians on the principles developed by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster⁷⁵ (1778-1838) who, in 1798, opened a school in Southwark for the education of poor children. Lancaster's system of teaching involved using older or more advanced pupils known as monitors to instruct groups of less advanced ones in a large school under the superintendence of one or more teachers at low cost. When Lancaster fell into debt he was rescued by two fellow Quakers, Joseph Fox and William Allen, who in 1808 took over his school and formed the *Institution for Promoting the British System for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion*.⁷⁶ In 1814, the society was re-formed as the *British and Foreign Schools Society*, usually referred to as the *British Society*, its aim being to establish schools and institutions for the training of teachers without regard to religious affiliation. However, in practice most British schools were attached to some nonconformist denomination. The chief reason for this was the establishment of the second voluntary organisation, *The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales*, or the *National Society* as it was more commonly referred to. Supporters of the Anglican Church believed that any form of national education should be the sole preserve of the Established Church. The National Society was founded on 16 October 1811 at a meeting which declared, 'That the National Religion should be made the foundation of national education, and should be the first and chief thing taught to the poor, according

⁷⁴ Hansard, (HC), 1807, ix, 798, 13 June 1807.

⁷⁵ For a general discussion about Lancaster and his work see Sturt, *Education of the People*, pp. 19-24.

⁷⁶ W. Armytage, *Four Hundred Years of English Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 90-1.

to the excellent liturgy and catechism provided by our Church.'⁷⁷ Following the introduction of government grants for school building, the British Society and the National Society became the largest benefactors. 'Although the British Society made the earlier start, the greater resources and parochial organisation which buttressed the National Society soon gave it the dominant position. When, from 1833, government subsidies began to be available to the two societies for the building of schools, the financial support was distributed in proportion to the money raised by the supporters of the two societies, and it was the National Society that year by year received by far the greatest share.'⁷⁸

The champion of popular education during the early part of the nineteenth century was the politician Henry Brougham, one of the founders of the influential *Edinburgh Review* in 1802; Member of Parliament 1810-12 and 1815-30; Lord Chancellor 1830-34, whose 'spectacular exertions'⁷⁹ between 1816 and 1820 secured a succession of Parliamentary inquiries into 'The Education of the Lower Orders'. In 1818, Brougham's Committee reported on evidence to support a slowly increasing interest in the education of the poor in the larger towns and cities, but that in sparsely populated areas there was very great paucity in that regard. His recommendation that the state should assist in the provision of funds to counter the deficiencies nationwide led to the Parish Schools Bill of 1820. The bill failed but it did alert Parliament to the current state of popular education in England and Wales following detailed investigations undertaken during the previous year. The statistics showed that about 501,000 children were attending unendowed (including dame) schools, and that 165,432 pupils were receiving instruction in the endowed schools, the difference between the two being that the former received some form of regular financial assistance, and the latter received none. This equated to one in fourteen or fifteen of the population.⁸⁰

Although Brougham's enthusiasm did not falter (as noted earlier he published, in 1825, *Practical Observations on the Education of the People*), the next

⁷⁷ Quoted in Silver, *Education of the Poor*, p. 11.

⁷⁸ Silver, *Education of the Poor*, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 113.

⁸⁰ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 118.

significant step arose as a consequence of the Reform Bills of 1831-32 which stimulated Parliamentary interest in popular education once again. In 1833, the government voted the first annual grant to support the cause of a system of national elementary education. The amount was a cautious £20,000, which was channelled almost entirely through the National Society and the British Society to assist in the building of denominational schools. As a result of this, the Committee of Council on Education was established in 1839 under the secretaryship of Dr. James Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) to ensure that the grant was being spent effectively.⁸¹ This was the most significant move to date in the intervention of the state in education for the Committee of Council, through its rapid succession of Minutes and Codes, prepared the groundwork for further important developments. Armytage states that during his ten years in office, Kay was instrumental in bringing about four significant developments. These were the founding of the teacher training colleges; the setting up of the school inspectorate 'with comprehensive roles as advisors and friends'; the establishment of the apprentice or pupil teacher system; and 'the harnessing of local enthusiasm for schools through local committees of managers not only for schools run by the National and British and Foreign Societies but for those run by Roman Catholics.'⁸²

Table 1. Increase in public money to provide for elementary education for elementary schools (thousands of pounds).

1833	20	1850	193	1862	775
1840	30	1852	164	1864	655
1842	32	1854	189	1866	676
1844	39	1856	251	1868	750
1846	58	1858	669	1870	895
1848	83	1860	723		

Source: Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society*, p. 14.

⁸¹ J. Goldstrom, *Education: Elementary Education 1780-1900* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), p. 103.

⁸² Armytage, *English Education*, pp. 114-16. See also, F. Smith, *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth* (London: John Murray, 1923).

In 1858, by which time expenditure on education was approaching £700,000, the government appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle *to inquire into the present state of Popular Education in England, and to consider and report what Measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people.*⁸³

In the summer of 1858, the whole population of England and Wales, according to the estimate of the Registrar General, was 19,523,103.⁸⁴ When it reported in 1861 the Newcastle Commission stated that of the 2,655,767 children who ought to have been attending school in 1858, no fewer than 2,535,462 were found to be on the books of schools of some description or other. As a proportion of the population this represented 1 in 7.7 or 12.99 per cent receiving instruction in weekday schools. Allowing for the estimate that 321,768 children were above that section of society labelled 'the poorer classes', and therefore beyond the scope of their inquiries, the Commissioners concluded that 2,213,694 pupils were receiving elementary instruction which was 'nearly as high as can be reasonably expected.' On the face of it the fact that 120,305 children were without any form of instruction may appear remarkable at a time when compulsory education was not a way of life, and was 'neither attainable or desirable' according to the Commissioners. They observed however 'that a very delusive estimate of the state of education must result from confining attention to the mere amount of numbers under day school instruction.' Statistical analysis showed that a very high proportion of children attended irregularly and infrequently. Pupils tended to leave school at eleven, with about 5.4 per cent remaining after thirteen. Average school life was about five years.⁸⁵

One of the main recommendations of the Newcastle Report was that there should be a system of payment by results in order to simplify the existing complicated and time consuming structure of Parliamentary grant aid. These grants would be reduced to two in number. The first, from the government, was

⁸³ The Newcastle Report, 1861.

⁸⁴ *Twenty-first Report of the Registrar General, 1858*, p. xliii, table xxvi.

⁸⁵ J. Maclure, *Educational Documents England and Wales 1816 to the Present Day* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 71.

based on the average attendance of pupils in a school where a certificated assistant was employed and subject to a satisfactory report from HM Inspector. This, it was calculated, would have the effect of reducing to £630,000 the annual cost to the country. The second form of monetary aid, amounting to £428,400, was to be provided from a rate levied by a new county or borough board which would appoint examiners to test the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and 'plain work' (needlework) for the girls. Further conditions were attached to both grants.

Notwithstanding that the Newcastle Commission provided the first comprehensive survey of the state of elementary education in the country it was subsequently roundly condemned by Smith as being from an educational point of view 'profoundly unsatisfactory' and offering 'the most meagre and sterile view of the educational process that has ever been enunciated.' Furthermore, 'it had no vision.'⁸⁶ Another view, by Simon, asserts that it was 'the only Royal Commission of this period which had no outcome in legislation, and introduced no fundamental reform.'⁸⁷ But it was for the promotion of the system known as *payment by results* that the Commission would receive lasting notoriety – and discredit - in due course.

In 1856, the status of education had been elevated by the creation of a Department of Education by Order of Council. Its head was a member of the House of Commons who was accountable to the house for expenditure incurred by the department. The official head was still the Lord President, and the new officer was accorded the title Vice-President, his appointment being in the gift of the Prime Minister. In 1859 Robert Lowe⁸⁸ was appointed to the office of vice-president. Lowe, a known adherent of the free trade economy, and a careful guardian of the public purse, had awaited the report of the Newcastle Commission with eager anticipation. Its fate and that of the schools rested almost entirely on him. 'Controlling as he did the money voted by Parliament for

⁸⁶ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 248.

⁸⁷ B. Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960), p. 349.

⁸⁸ Sylvester, *Lowe and Education*. This study contains a comprehensive account of the life and work of Lowe, 'and argues for a reconsideration of his somewhat reactionary reputation.'

education, almost independent in his office, directing a staff of inspectors who spread abroad his views, the Vice-President's concept of education, in a nation sharply divided on educational questions as recent controversies had shown it to be, was destined to have an overwhelming influence in a time of change.⁸⁹

It appears that Lowe was not much impressed with the recommendations of the Newcastle Commissioners, but he did favour the proposal which advocated the introduction of a system of payment by results since it aligned well with his views on the future funding of elementary education by the state. As its name suggests, payment by results was designed to ensure that taxpayers' money assigned for elementary education should produce the maximum return in terms of cost effective achievement. Smith argues that Lowe 'forced his way to one general principle that of payment by results.' Such a system would not only be simple to administer, but it would also encourage both attendance and efficiency, while allowing school managers more freedom. Most importantly perhaps the school teacher would have little choice but to maximise his or her efforts in ensuring good attendance and being able to produce the best results since the annual grant to the school and his or her salary would depend primarily upon those two matters.⁹⁰

Lowe experienced considerable opposition both within and outside Parliament in his determination to carry forward the concept of payment by results. In delivering his proposals to the House of Commons on 13 February 1862, Lowe famously declared 'I cannot promise the House that this system will be an economical one, but I can promise that it shall be either one or the other. If it is not cheap it shall be efficient; if it is not efficient it shall be cheap. The present is neither one or the other. If the schools do not give instruction the public money will not be demanded, but if instruction is given the public money will be demanded – I cannot say to what amount, but the public will get value for its money.'⁹¹ Following minor amendments, Lowe carried through his proposals.⁹²

⁸⁹ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 255.

⁹⁰ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 255.

⁹¹ Hansard, (HC), 165, col. 229, 13 February 1862.

⁹² *Education Minute by The Right Honourable The Lords of the Committee of The Privy Council on Education Confirming the Alterations of The Revised Code of Regulations Announced in Parliament on 13th February and 28th*

In Part 1, Section 1 of the Revised Code the terms and conditions under which annual grants were to be awarded to elementary schools were carefully explained. Crucially, in order to be presented for examination, every scholar had to achieve a minimum of 200 attendances, whether morning or afternoon or both, in each school year, and must demonstrate competency upon examination in the Three Rs, and 'plain needlework' for girls. The Revised Code of 1862 achieved immediate and lasting notoriety because of payment by results, and it became the measure by which future codes were appraised. It was also the instrument that introduced the school log book.

According to Murphy, it became increasingly evident during the 1860s that the obstacles to a truly national system of elementary education had to be overcome. His assertion was based on a number of factors: the escalating threat of foreign competition in industry and commerce enhanced by the lack of a generally literate labour force at home; the want of a system on which to build an advanced, technical and commercial education; an increasing awareness by parents of the value of education; the mounting interest by socialist, secularist, and trade union movements in the importance of education; the extension of the franchise brought about by the Reform Act of 1867; and 'even Robert Lowe, the architect of the system of 'payment by results', became convinced that it was now necessary 'to compel our future masters to learn their letters'.⁹³ Lowe, who was opposed to the extension of the franchise on the grounds that it would give the uneducated the opportunity to influence the nation's interests, has often been misquoted in his speech to the House of Commons in July 1867. His words are sometimes popularly summarised as, 'we must educate our masters.' In fact, what Lowe said, following his begrudging acceptance of 'this rash and abrupt measure', was that it would be necessary to introduce 'by the most universal measures of education that can be devised' the means by which to put right the deficit – 'I believe it will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters'⁹⁴ In 1863, W. E. Forster,

March, 1862, and specifying the course to be adopted for putting it into effect (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1862).

⁹³ Murphy, *Education Act*, pp. 28-9.

⁹⁴ Hansard, (HC), 188, cols. 1548-9, 15 July 1867.

together with fellow MPs, had questioned in the House of Commons the right of officials, under Lowe's direction, to censor school inspectors' reports when their content was felt to be contrary to opinions held by The Committee of Council. The government agreed and Lowe felt compelled to resign the vice-presidency in 1864. A Select Committee subsequently exonerated Lowe and The Committee of Council from any malpractice.

On 9 December 1868, W. E. Forster⁹⁵ succeeded Lord Robert Montagu in the office formerly occupied by Robert Lowe as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. It was Forster who was responsible, in his capacity of Vice-President of the Education Department (as it was by then known), for guiding through Parliament the measure that would become the Elementary Education Act, 1870.

William Edward Forster (1818-1886) was Liberal MP for Bradford from 1861 until his death. In 1841 Forster married Jane Arnold, the daughter of Dr. Thomas Arnold the reforming head master of Rugby School, and the sister of Matthew Arnold, the writer, poet, critic, and outspoken inspector of schools. Forster is said to have taken an early interest in education while residing in the hamlet of Bolton on the outskirts of Bradford for five years from 1841, where the local infants' school engaged his notice.⁹⁶ One of Forster's earliest addresses on the subject of education was in 1850. At a public gathering in the Temperance Hall, Bradford, he moved a resolution acknowledging the work of the voluntary societies in the cause of elementary education, and urged upon Parliament 'the importance of meeting the wants of national education by

⁹⁵ Much has been written about Forster. The most comprehensive study is a biography by T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of the Rt Hon. W. E. Forster* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1888 in 2 vols. Reissued by Social Documents Ltd., Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970 in 1 vol.). However, this book was commissioned by Forster's widow who made it 'very clear what she did and did not want to see in it' according to M. and D. Warwick in their book *Eminent Victorians. The Forsters of Burley-in-Wharfedale* (Burley-in-Wharfedale: Burley-in-Wharfedale Local History Publications, 1994), p. 64. It is believed that Jane Forster destroyed her late husband's private papers following the completion of Wemyss Reid's biography.

⁹⁶ J. Jackson, *Bolton Lane School, Bradford. A History* (Privately published, 1985), p. 3.

devising such measures as are necessary for its extension and improvement, on the principle of strict impartiality to all religious communions, and as far as possible on the basis of local management.'⁹⁷ These prophetic aspirations would, in due course, translate into one of the most momentous pieces of nineteenth century legislation.

Forster introduced his Education Bill to the House of Commons on 17 February 1870. In essence, he proposed to provide in England and Wales a universal system of elementary education by supplementing that which already existed. 'Our object is to complete the present voluntary system, to fill up gaps.' This would be achieved by the establishment of locally elected school boards funded by local rates with power to frame bye-laws for the compulsory attendance of children aged from five to twelve. After considerable debate the bill was passed into law on 9 August 1870.⁹⁸

2.4 Bradford's 'educational darkness'.

In anticipation of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, the government instructed local authorities to assess the want of school places in their areas. This order was in due course extended to school boards. When, in June 1871, the recently established Bradford School Board published the results of its thorough inquiries into the state of elementary provision in the town it revealed that only 1,265 out of an estimated 24,303 children in the borough did not have access to elementary instruction.⁹⁹ This impressive statistic belied the true state of affairs. While there may have been a surprising profusion of places, the quality of the teaching on offer was, according to a retrospective assessment by the *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, 'simply miserable.' It was a period which the newspaper condemned as Bradford's 'educational darkness'.¹⁰⁰ From the end of the eighteenth century Bradford saw a number of attempts by individuals and

⁹⁷ *Bradford Observer*, 2 May 1850.

⁹⁸ The Elementary Education Act, 1870. (33 & 34 Vict. c 75).

⁹⁹ *Report of the Bradford School Board to The Right Honourable The Lords of the Committee of Council on Education*, dated 26 May 1871. National Archives, ED, 16/357. (The report comprises three unnumbered pages).

¹⁰⁰ *The Bradford School Board. A Retrospect.*— I-V, I, *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, 1903. (Precise dates not known. Bradford Local Studies Library reference, B.379.WRO). Bradford School Board hereafter referred to as BSB.

voluntary bodies to promote the education of the poorer classes. These pioneering efforts provided the foundations upon which would be built an organised system of universal elementary school provision in the town following the introduction of Forster's historic measure.

2.5 The Sunday School Movement in Bradford.

The origins of day school elementary education in Bradford can be traced to the earliest Sunday schools, which instructed children in the bible and, in many cases, provided them with lessons in the basic skills of reading and writing.

In Bradford, the first Sunday school appears to have been opened in 1773 by John Brown, an adherent of the Reverend John Wesley. About twenty children were taught by Brown at his home in Mill Bank, but the extent of the tuition provided is not known. The appointment of the Reverend John Crosse as Vicar of Bradford in 1784 revitalised the ministry of the Established Church in Bradford. Crosse, who was born in London in 1739, spent 32 years in Bradford and died in 1816 while still in office. His evangelical ministry and work among the poor were legendary and endeared him to the townsfolk. According to Scruton, a visiting clergyman spoke glowingly of Crosse - 'such a vicar' - and was astonished to see, on 2 October 1814, a congregation of no fewer than 4,000 at the Sunday evening service in the Parish Church.¹⁰¹ Following Crosse's appointment the Anglicans became very active in promoting Sunday school instruction with three such places operating by 1786. These were located in Tyrell Street, in White Abbey, and in High Street, the last two being situated in particularly poor districts.¹⁰² In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the recently established Parish Church Sunday School was attracting large numbers, and by April 1822 there were 419 children on the books.¹⁰³ An 1830 regional trades' directory contained a list of Sunday schools in Bradford, together with the number of children in attendance.

¹⁰¹ W. Scruton, *Pen and Pencil Pictures of Old Bradford* (Queensbury: Mountain Press, 1968), pp. 32-4. (First published in Bradford by Thomas Brear and Company, 1888).

¹⁰² Scruton, *Pen and Pencil Pictures*, p. 103.

¹⁰³ Scruton, *Pen and Pencil Pictures*, p. 105.

Table 2. Sunday Schools in Bradford, 1830.

Sunday School.	Location.	Number of Pupils.
St. Peter's (Parish Church)	Stott Hill	848
Christ Church	Darley Street	600
Wesleyan Methodist	School Street	600
Wesleyan Methodist	White Abbey	300
Wesleyan Methodist	Vicar Lane	200
Wesleyan Methodist	Barkerend	150
Baptist	Westgate & Lady Rhydes	500
Baptist	Bridge Street & Wapping	500
Independent	Little Horton Lane, Little Horton & Wibsey	950
Independent	Smiddles Lane & Bank Top	830
Primitive Methodist	Bowling Lane	320
		Total 5,798

Source: Parson and White, *Directory of the Borough of Leeds, the City of York & the Clothing District of Yorkshire 1830*.

By 1835, all the major nonconformist denominations in Bradford contributed between them 24 Sunday schools and were instructing 7,796 children, or an estimated 60-75 per cent of those in the five to fourteen age group.¹⁰⁴ In 1843 it was stated, somewhat generously perhaps, that the number of Sunday school pupils in Bradford parish was 19,950.¹⁰⁵ Ibbetson's 1845 *Directory* indicated that the number of Sunday schools in and around Bradford was about 50 and catered for 13,620 pupils.¹⁰⁶ The Bradford Sunday School Union, established in 1850, saw an attempt by most local Sunday schools to form a mutually beneficial alliance to bring about improvements through the discussion of views

¹⁰⁴ T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society. Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 288.

¹⁰⁵ E. Baines, *The Social, Educational, and Religious State of the Manufacturing Districts* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1843. Re-issued New York: Kelley, 1969), p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ J. Ibbetson, *Directory of Bradford, 1845* (Bradford: Ibbetson, 1845).

and opinions of common interest, and to form a library exchange system. The success of this venture may be measured by the fact that in 1869 there were 42 Sunday schools affiliated to the association which between them had almost 14,000 children on roll, and 2007 'teachers'. The Union's library contained 19,717 books.¹⁰⁷ 'The most important reason for Sunday school attendance', according to Koditschek, 'was that most workers wanted to educate their children and could do so in no other way.'¹⁰⁸ Walsh, apparently forming his own assessment of the significance of Sunday school tuition as a means of formal education, states 'We must not lose sight of the fact that these schools were, from an academic point of view, hardly worth serious consideration as institutions in which real teaching was done.' Nonetheless he concedes, 'to be fair to them, their primary purpose was not to provide scholastic instruction so much as religious training, and what little they did in the way of secular teaching was supererogatory.'¹⁰⁹

There appears to be no contemporary evaluation of the quality of early nineteenth century Sunday school instruction in Bradford. John James, the first historian of the town, writing in 1841, merely observes that such places were 'important agents in the cultivation of the young and tender mind', and that they were conducted with 'great care and zeal.'¹¹⁰ While in 1889, Scruton, assessing eighty years of Sunday school provision in the town, observed that they were 'instrumental in imparting elementary instruction to thousands of children, who, but for them would have remained in profound and hopeless ignorance.'¹¹¹ James's and Scruton's optimism, however, should be treated with some scepticism. They were local historians and writers who would not wish to jeopardise sales of their books by raising the indignation of their middle class audiences. Koditschek's view is that the earliest Sunday schools in Bradford had been established 'by Anglican elites with Methodist assistance in the late

¹⁰⁷ H. Walsh, 'An Outline of the History of Education in Bradford before 1870.' (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Leeds, 1936), p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Koditschek, *Class Formation*, p. 289.

¹⁰⁹ Walsh, 'Education in Bradford before 1870', p. 53.

¹¹⁰ J. James, *The History and Topography of Bradford*. 2 vols. (Queensbury: Mountain Press, 1967), p. 261. (First published in London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1841).

¹¹¹ Scruton, *Pen and Pencil Pictures*, p. 102.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as an antidote to the popular restiveness of that crisis-ridden age.¹¹² This corresponds with middle class opinion which was then in the process of being transformed from the long-held attitude that an ignorant proletariat was safer for the preservation of laissez-faire than was an educated one. Industrialisation and urbanisation were bringing about changes to the social order and, as Hurt has pointed out, 'early educational enthusiasts were quick to see that the traditional social values might be safeguarded by giving the children of the labouring poor a godly and religious upbringing.'¹¹³ Ittmann's view is that in the minds of most of Bradford's middle class 'education stood next to religion as a means of moral and social improvement.' The town's elite believed that education served a twofold purpose: 'to moralize the working class and to offer them a chance at self-improvement and upward mobility.'¹¹⁴ Sunday school instruction, both religious and secular, played a significant role in the development of day school education in Bradford.

2.6 The Establishment of Day Schools in Bradford.

During the period of the English Reformation in the sixteenth century most cathedral schools were closed and replaced by new foundations funded from the dissolution of the monasteries with emphasis on the education of children of the new yeoman classes. The Boys' Grammar School, Bradford had been established in the middle of the sixteenth century, and 300 years later was offering scholarships to all boys regardless of class. However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were no other day schools worthy of the description to meet the needs of the poorer classes in Bradford. In 1806, a few ladies opened a School of Industry for girls who were taught to read, knit, and sew, its main purpose being to fulfil a need for reliable domestic servants.¹¹⁵ The first 'practical and successful' day school in Bradford to be associated with the education of working class children was opened in 1816 by the Society of Friends. Affiliated to the British Society, and for the teaching of girls only without

¹¹² Koditschek, *Class Formation*, p. 287.

¹¹³ Hurt, *Education in Evolution*, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, p. 110.

¹¹⁵ James, *History and Topography*, pp. 260-1.

regard to religious persuasion, the school charged 1d a week. Initially 116 pupils were admitted and the school showed signs of success, but by 1822 the number of pupils in regular attendance had slumped to 40, the decline being put down to the industrialisation of Bradford.¹¹⁶ '.... discouragements, peculiar to a manufacturing district, must be expected to continue, arising from the uncultivated state of the children's minds, their limited time for improvement, and the early age at which they receive their small share of instruction.'¹¹⁷ However, the British Society, keen to ensure the school's survival, prevailed upon local Friends to afford financial support. The response was very enthusiastic, and 'The Quakers' School', by which name it was generally known, moved in 1831 to purpose-built premises in Chapel Street where children of both sexes were accommodated. In 1841, James observed that about 200 boys, 140 girls, and 130 infants were on the registers each paying two pence a week, with an extra penny charge for those instructed in writing. The school operated on the monitorial system.¹¹⁸

A small number of factory owners gave attention to the education of their youngest employees. An early benefactor was John Wood, who, by 1830, was the largest textile spinning manufacturer in Bradford with 3,000 employees. In 1832, Wood opened a day school on his premises, the 500 or so children who worked in his mill and others receiving in relays instruction from the resident school master. This large government inspected factory school was very successful and continued in existence until about 1867 when the land on which the mill was situated was sold.¹¹⁹ In 1836 Wood built the nearby St. James's School under the auspices of the National Society with accommodation for 150 pupils.¹²⁰ His example was followed by others, notably Titus Salt (alpaca wool

¹¹⁶ G. Fenn, *Development of Education in an Industrial Town (Bradford) During the 19th Century* (Leeds University, Institute of Education: Researches and Studies, 1952-53), p. 33.

¹¹⁷ *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, 1816*. Quoted in Fenn, *Development of Education*, p. 33.

¹¹⁸ James, *History and Topography*, p. 260.

¹¹⁹ J. Halsall, 'The Factory School of John Wood and William Walker.' In *Forster Bulletin*, May 1971, pp. 36-40

¹²⁰ St. James's School survived until 1970 by which time most domestic properties in the surrounding area had been swept away through wholesale demolition. The school buildings later suffered the same fate.

manufacturer), Henry Ripley (textile dyer), and Edward Akroyd (worsted manufacturer) who included the provision of day schools in their mid nineteenth century model villages situated, respectively, at Saltaire near Shipley, at Ripleyville, East Bowling, Bradford, and at Akroyden, Halifax.¹²¹ Earlier, in 1831, the vicar of Christ Church, Darley Street, Bradford established the first church day school in the town where 90 boys and 60 girls were instructed for a fee of 2d a week, and 'for those who wished to learn to write, 3d.'¹²²

These few elementary day schools were the only ones worthy of commendation in the town in 1839, the year in which William Scoresby (1789-1857) was appointed Vicar of Bradford. Scoresby was 35 when he was ordained having previously served as the master of a whaling ship. He was strict with his crew, and in Bradford his 'autocratic manner did not endear him to his people.'¹²³ He came to Bradford at a time when the Church of England was in the process of reassessing its role in educational affairs. As Smith has observed, 'There was a growing belief within the Church that elementary education was desirable and necessary to ensure stability in Church and state.'¹²⁴ At the onset of his ministry in the town Dr. Scoresby determined upon the formidable task of 'straightening out' the place and restoring the Anglican Church at the centre of local affairs. Scoresby felt that one important way of doing this was by evangelising poor children through the experience of church day schools, and within a very short time his Parochial Schools Fund had amassed sufficient resources to enable him to open nine day schools at several locations within a few miles radius of Bradford Parish Church. 20,000 children are said to have passed through these schools during Dr. Scoresby's seven years in Bradford. Thereafter all newly created parishes in Bradford had a day school attached so that by 1863 there

¹²¹ See J. Jowitt (ed.), *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1986).

¹²² *Education in Bradford*, p. 40.

¹²³ *Education in Bradford*, p. 42. See also R. Scoresby-Jackson, *The Life of William Scoresby* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. First published in 1861).

¹²⁴ J. Smith, 'The real milch cow? The work of Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan clergymen in elementary schools in the second half of the nineteenth century.' *History of Education*, 2002, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 117-37, p. 119.

were around twenty such schools within walking distance of the town centre.¹²⁵ Scoresby's attempts in various ways to reinvigorate Anglicanism in Bradford were only partially successful. Nonconformity had gained a substantial foothold by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the high influx of Irish people thereafter ensured a rapid increase in Roman Catholicism. By 1851, adherents of the Church of England in the town were outnumbered by more than four to one.¹²⁶

2.7 Education for All. The Bradford School Board Established.

A meeting of the Town Council for the Borough of Bradford, held at the Court House on 20 September 1870, unanimously resolved on the desirability of establishing a school board in accordance with the provisions of the new education act. Accordingly a formal memorial signed by the mayor and the town clerk was forthwith despatched to the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education: 'Your Memorialists pray your Lordships that a School Board in and for the District of the said Borough under provisions of the said Act of Parliament may be forthwith established.'¹²⁷ Their Lordships at once felt disposed to accede and through the intervention of the Mayor of Bradford the ratepayers were relieved of the expense of an election when, on 30 November 1870, a list originally numbering 46 candidates was whittled down to the requisite number of fifteen 'influential people' who were formally endorsed to create the first Bradford School Board.¹²⁸ 'As a specimen of [political and religious] compromise the first Board was a very fine production, the balance being something wonderful.'¹²⁹

The Elementary Education Act 1870, required every local authority, no later than 1 January 1871, to furnish the Education Department with a return 'containing such particulars with respect to the elementary schools and children

¹²⁵ *Education in Bradford*, pp. 42-5.

¹²⁶ T. Jowitt, 'The Pattern of Religion in Victorian Bradford'. In Wright and Jowitt (eds.), *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 37-61, p. 43.

¹²⁷ The National Archives, ED 16/357.

¹²⁸ *Education in Bradford*, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁹ *Bradford School Board. A Retrospect.-I.*

requiring elementary education in their district¹³⁰ Since the school board though anticipated was not yet established (the act was placed on the Statute Book in August 1870), and in consequence of a short timescale, that duty fell to the town clerk. Notwithstanding, under Section 95 of the act, which gave the Education Department the right to demand from school boards 'any information' it might require, the department, on 20 December 1870, ordered the Bradford School Board to furnish its own account of existing school provision in the borough. The town clerk, by this date, had delivered his return which the department passed on to the Board. Therefore, following the appointment of officers, the Board's most pressing duty was to gain an accurate picture of the extent of existing school provision in the town which would enable it to assess the deficiency in school places and determine where in the borough the accommodation was required to 'fill up gaps'. By the time sanction was at last given to build new schools no fewer than six separate investigations had taken place, for not only were the town clerk and the School Board as a whole involved in the provision and analysis of statistical returns, so too was the local HM Inspector of Schools; HM Inspector of Returns; the School Board's Statistical Committee; and finally the Department of Education. However, the most detailed survey was that undertaken initially by the School Board. It set about this monumental task with determination explaining that 'the Board have not seen fit to delegate the personal inspection of the Schools to other persons, but have themselves undertaken the work of ascertaining the state of Elementary Education within their district.'¹³¹ The head master of St. James's Boys' National School, Bradford recorded in his log book on 13 February 1871 a visit by the Right Reverend Bishop Ryan and Mr John V. Godwin, members of the Board, for the purpose of gathering statistics about the composition of the pupils.¹³²

On 26 May 1871, the Board was in a position to respond to the Education Department and forwarded a detailed explanatory letter illustrating how they had set about their mission and how they had arrived at their findings by means

¹³⁰ Elementary Education Act 1870, Section 67. Returns by local authority.

¹³¹ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

¹³² St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 286.

of schedules itemising all manner of educational establishments which, however loosely, merited the description *school*. The schedules were accompanied by a map plotting the location of the schools.¹³³ Not unexpectedly perhaps there was a 'considerable difference' between the returns forwarded by the town clerk and the Board's own assessment, which the latter explained '(a) by the greater care used in obtaining the later statistics, and (b) by the interval of time between the two Returns, which is an important element of consideration in such a changing and rapidly increasing population as that of the Borough of Bradford.'¹³⁴

The School Board was anxious to draw their Lordships' attention to Bradford's increasing population, noting that it had risen from 106,218 in 1861 to 145,827 in 1871, or about 4,000 persons on average a year in that period, 'and there is no reason to suppose that in future years it will be less.' In estimating the number of children of school age in the borough the Board employed two equations, the first being the Education Department's ruling that one sixth of the population, in this case 24,303, should be provided for. The second, 'which has met with very common acceptance', was a rule of thumb measure that those between the ages of three to five comprised 51 per 1000, and those between the ages of five and thirteen numbered 183 per 1000 of the population. From these figures the Board deducted (in accordance with tradition) one-seventh for children belonging to the middle class, the supposition being that they were educated privately, and a further one-fifth supposed absent from unavoidable causes, being mentally defective, seriously ill, and so on. By this reckoning the Board determined that 23,395 places were required, 908 fewer than in the first equation. However, it was more concerned about the distribution of the children throughout the borough 'for some parts would yield but a very small, and others a much larger, proportion of those who should be found in Public Elementary Schools, and any mere estimate which the Board can make of the

¹³³ Searches of local official repositories and the National Archives' records have yielded only one of these documents, *Appendix to Schedules of Schools 1871*. However, the *Report of the Bradford School Board to the Committee of Council* (see reference 99) contains some useful statistical abstracts from the schedules.

¹³⁴ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

distribution of the School population must evidently be only approximate and very uncertain.¹³⁵ This was an important point which the Board was at pains to emphasise. The following is the School Board's tabulated assessment of the school age population in Bradford.

Table 3. The distribution and numbers of school age children in Bradford, 1871. (It will be observed that the totals of the figures in the second and last columns do not add up exactly, the difference being that the total of the first set of figures is 145,818; and that of the last set is 5,573).

Wards	Population	School Age, (1-6 th)	Accommodation Existing	Additional Accom. contemplated or in course of erection	Scholars on Register	Average attendance	Half-Timers
North	4837	806	None	None	None	None	None
East	18041	3007	2362	672	2923	2342	1129
South	21600	3600	1959	551	1673	1417	781
Bowling	20983	3497	2217	1239	1771	1387	393
Little Horton	31683	5280	4785	435	4362	3608	1363
Great Horton	9030	1506	2483	...	1662	1344	724
West	19962	3327	2813	1056	1618	1302	355
Manningham	19682	3280	2123	343	2010	1631	828
	145827	24303	18742	4296	16019	13031	5580

Source: BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*. National Archives, ED 16/357.

This tabulation represented the provision of school places where the standard of teaching was regarded as being efficient, although 'the Board cannot but acknowledge that they have had some difficulty in determining what Schools should be regarded as efficient, - especially in relation to the quality of the teaching.'¹³⁶ The Board conceded that they had no definition of the term 'efficient', but were content to apply that description to those schools which were receiving a grant from the Education Department, or were intending to seek one, and that they had formed 'a hopeful estimate' of 24 private adventure

¹³⁵ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

¹³⁶ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

schools where instruction was being given to 1,623 children. (So-called private adventure schools, sometimes known as dame schools, were usually conducted by a person often unqualified as a teacher in his or her own home or in rented premises, and whose income and expenses were dependent on the fees paid by the pupils). Working on the Education Department's equation to determine the want of places, the Board concluded that existing and contemplated accommodation provided 23,038 'efficient' places for the 24,303 children of school age, the arrangement of 73 schools in total being:-

32 efficient schools receiving annual grants from the Education Department.

10 efficient schools (including two which were projected) not receiving annual grants but intending to seek them.

7 efficient schools not receiving and not intending to seek annual grants.

24 efficient adventure schools to which no annual grants can be made.

In addition, there were a further 41 private adventure schools where 555 pupils were under the care of efficient teaching staff but housed in sixteen assorted premises regarded as unsuitable, while an additional 686 children were receiving some form of instruction deemed unsuitable in 25 buildings which were also defective. The Board also comprehensively updated the town clerk's returns to show a variety of establishments imparting some form of knowledge. This list included 27 Sunday schools; six schools which charged a fee above 9d and were therefore not admissible under the act; and six 'miscellaneous' institutions including orphan and evening schools. It also recorded twelve private adventure schools that had been discontinued since the town clerk's census. On the face of it there were perhaps an unforeseen number of efficient places available to Bradford's school age children, the deficiency being 1,265. However, another method of calculation would have produced a surfeit of 1,525

places since, as the Board pointed out, in relation to capitation grants the number of half timers was reduced by one half.¹³⁷

In submitting their report to the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education on 26 May 1871, the School Board did just as they were asked to do which was to provide a statistical analysis of the current state of elementary education provision in Bradford. They made no recommendations arising from it, but emphasised 'that the distribution of the children between the ages of 3 and 13, is as material an element of consideration as the distribution of the existing and proposed Schools.' The Board was clearly uneasy with the report feeling that it was deficient in information that would enable it to make uncompromising decisions about the want, if any, of efficient school accommodation. They waited on further information. 'When the numbers and distribution of the children have been ascertained, when the efficiency of existing Schools has been determined, and when the grants for proposed Schools have been decided on by your Lordships, the Board will be prepared to comply most willingly with any requisition which may increase the sufficiency and efficiency of the public Elementary Schools within their jurisdiction.'¹³⁸

On the one hand the School Board's in depth survey provides the best and most comprehensive picture of educational provision for the children of Bradford at the introduction of universal elementary education, while on the other hand it reveals little about the quality and substance of that provision, or about how schooling was perceived in Bradford. The statistics highlighted two major problems. The first was although there appeared to be an almost sufficient number of school places in 1871, the average attendance of pupils at 13,031 was just over half the 24,303 eligible to occupy the places, and of those who attended 5,580 half timers were legally obliged to do so under the terms of the Factory acts. The second important issue was the breadth and quality of the education on offer, and whether the provisions of the Forster Act were satisfied. Many of the schools categorised as efficient gained that description only through the leniency of HM Inspector who stated that 'the general knowledge of the children is very small, and their understanding of the meaning of common

¹³⁷ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

¹³⁸ BSB, *Report to Committee of Council*.

words in the books they read is so imperfect that the reading is often little more than a mechanical exercise.¹³⁹ Since children in grant aided schools were rarely taught anything beyond the Three Rs prescribed by the Revised Code of 1862, it is not surprising that the Inspector found in one school none of the children in the first class able to name the county in which they lived. Even before they had gathered their exhaustive data the members of the newly elected school board cannot have failed to realise the enormity of the mission that faced them on these two matters alone. There were other important obstacles such as poverty, parental indifference, migratory tendencies, and, above all else, the demand for child labour. The problems associated with the quest to achieve the regular attendance of pupils in the elementary schools of Bradford were not peculiar to the town – they were universal throughout the country during the nineteenth century - but the difficulties were exacerbated by the nature of Bradford's pre-eminent trade. By the middle of the nineteenth century Bradford was firmly established as the centre of the world's worsted cloth manufacturing industry, and the tension between school and child employment was one which was to occupy the attention of the Bradford School Board (perhaps more than any other board) throughout its entire existence. The issues surrounding elementary school attendance in Victorian Bradford are nowhere better illustrated than in the school log book. Chapter 3 discusses the significance of this neglected document as an important research tool for this topic.

¹³⁹ Quoted in *The Bradford School Board. A Retrospect.- I.*

Chapter 3

Log Book Case Study for the Topic – Attendance

This chapter traces the origin of the school log book and its rationale. This critical review suggests that the log book has been undervalued by historians. It explains also how the document has been analysed and employed in this study.

In an introduction to this source, the Scottish historian Wood observed, 'The expansion of education in the nineteenth century generated a remarkable group of historical records frequently full of social history.'¹⁴⁰ One of the most important of these, he said, was the school log book, the origin and existence of which Ball has also succinctly put into perspective in a study of elementary schooling through documents as a resource for the serious researcher. 'Every student of educational history must applaud Articles 55-63 of the Revised Code which prescribed their use.' Observing that they were a neglected source of information she asserts that such valuable documents could serve more general historical purposes.'¹⁴¹ Purkis, in a guide for teachers, stated that 'They are a major resource for any study of education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.'¹⁴² Yet, many years after these comments were made, it appears that school log books remain a mostly neglected source of first-hand information for students of local, social, cultural, and educational history. These original documents provide not only fascinating insight into the history of individual schools, but they show also many other aspects of contemporary school life from a perspective that has too often been ignored – that of the head teacher who was recording his or her experiences at the coal face, as it were. The dutiful manner in which head teachers maintained their official journal of events in the life of their schools often provides the historian with a wealth of

¹⁴⁰ S. Wood, 'Social History from School Logbooks.' *The Local Historian*, 14, no. 8, (November 1981), pp. 471-6, p. 471.

¹⁴¹ Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 254.

¹⁴² S. Purkiss, *A Teacher's Guide to Using School Buildings* (London: English Heritage, 1993), p. 20.

information quite supplementary to that which was obligatory. In fact, the spectrum is enormous and includes at one end commentary embracing, for instance, the government's prevailing ideas about educational thought and practice nationally, and at the other end the myriad ways in which the local community viewed the value of child education. Aside from this, however, most log books offer a unique insight into the wider school community with valuable and often incidental observations on the day to day life of the local neighbourhood.

In order to comprehend, interpret, and assess the school log book as a valuable historical source it is necessary to appreciate its *raison d'être*. How did it originate? What was the underlying principle that inaugurated this unique record on 1 January 1863?

Hurt rightly states that 'the nineteenth century saw a revolution in government.'¹⁴³ It was a time of escalating bureaucracy and control, especially in the field of public expenditure, with a decided shift towards monitoring and audit becoming increasingly evident through bodies such as the Poor Law Board, the Factory Inspectorate, and the burgeoning Education Department. The latter was formally constituted in 1856 and evolved from, but was still under the ultimate political control of, the Committee of the Privy Council on Education. The department grew rapidly in size and stature and became progressively more autocratic under the watchful eye of R. R. W. Lingens, who presided in the capacity of secretary during the years 1850-1870.

The only recommendation arising from the Newcastle Commission report that the government adopted was payment by results.¹⁴⁴ Having voted sums of public money for the purpose of education the government wished to ensure that it was being spent wisely. The log book was intended to provide one tangible method of audit, an official document instigated by the Committee of Council by which means HM Inspector could glean an insight into the manner in which a school had been conducted in the intervals between his visits, and

¹⁴³ Hurt, *Education in Evolution*, p. 147. Hurt relates the rise of the Education Department in Chapter 6, 'A Mid-Victorian Bureaucracy', pp. 147-85.

¹⁴⁴ Maclure, *Educational Documents*, p. 71.

which would assist him in compiling his annual report to his Whitehall superiors. Although it is not possible to determine how the specific instructions were devised for the keeping of the log book, it might be speculated upon that the person or persons within the civil service who crafted them would have been very mindful of the need to be able to demonstrate that taxpayers' money was not being wasted by any school in receipt of public funds. No doubt it was hoped that head teachers would assiduously so interpret and act upon the directives that a full and unambiguous account of their individual school's day-to-day progress would be readily available for HM Inspector's consideration. It was upon the report of the inspector that the all-important government grant was awarded or withheld, and the log book was one of the key instruments that enabled him to form an opinion about the efficiency or otherwise of the school.

The origin of the log book, as Ball pointed out, is to be found in Articles 55 to 63 of the Revised Code of 1862 (reproduced here), where its purpose is also explained.

55. In every school receiving annual grants is to be kept, besides the ordinary registers of attendance,

(a.) A diary or log-book.

(b.) A portfolio wherein may be laid all official letters, which should be numbered (1, 2, 3, &c.) in the order of their receipt.

Diary or Log Book of School.

56. The diary or log-book must be stoutly bound and contain not less than 500 ruled pages.

57. The principal teacher must daily make in the log-book the briefest entry which will suffice to specify either ordinary progress, or whatever other fact concerning the school or its teachers, such as the dates of withdrawals, commencements of duty, cautions, illness, &c., may require to be referred to at a future time, or may otherwise deserve to be recorded.

58. No reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered in the log-book.

59. No entry once made in the log-book may be removed nor altered otherwise than by a subsequent entry.

60. The inspector will call for the log-book at his annual visit, and will report whether it appears to have been properly kept throughout the year.

61. The inspector will not write any report on the good or bad state of the school in the log-book at the time of his visit, but will enter therein with his own hand the full name and standing (certificated teacher of the ---- class, or pupil-teacher of the ---- year, or assistant teacher) of each member of the school establishment. The inspector will not enter the names of pupil-teachers respecting whose admission the Committee of Council has not yet pronounced a decision.

62. The summary of the inspector's report when communicated by the Committee of Council to the managers must be copied into the log-book by the secretary of the latter, who must also enter the names and description of all teachers to be added to, or withdrawn from, those entered by the inspector, according to the decision of the Committee of Council upon the inspector's report. The secretary of the managers must sign this entry.

63. The inspector before making his entry of the school establishment in the following year will refer to his own entry made in the preceding year, and also to the entry which is required to be made by the secretary of the school pursuant to Article 62, and he will require to see entries in the log-book accounting for any subsequent change of the school establishment.¹⁴⁵

Sturt, paraphrasing one of HM Inspector's annual reports to the Committee of Council, states that the purpose of the log book was to record 'The progress of the classes, the value of the methods, fluctuations of attendance, co-operation of parents, rates of taking school fees, the visits made and the examination made by the Managers are matters the like of which passing under the notice of an observant teacher, and relating to which he may, without writing essays,

¹⁴⁵ *The Revised Code of Regulations, 1862, Section 1, p. 10.*

record many valuable facts. He should keep his diary as if he were taking notes for a report of his school at the end of each year.’¹⁴⁶

On 20 November 1862, Lingen, ‘who had made himself hated by all the partners in the business of education’¹⁴⁷ wrote to the inspectorate in his characteristically superior and condescending manner, to clarify the purpose of the log book.

With regard to a Diary or Log Book, beyond the matter referred to Articles 61-63, my Lords¹⁴⁸ are of opinion that a zealous and intelligent teacher will not be at a loss to make other entries, and will not find that the term ‘ordinary progress’ expresses the whole of his experience from year’s end to year’s end.

Log Books and Diaries are kept in other employments that offer no greater variety of observation.

If it were necessary to specify entries of importance, one that might be named would be the record of each occasion when the

¹⁴⁶ Sturt, *Education of the People*, pp. 265-6. The author is referring to the observations made by HMI Waddington in his general report for 1864 which was included in the *Report of The Committee of Council on Education, 1864-65*. PP, 1865, (3533), XLII.1, 195.

¹⁴⁷ Sturt, *Education of the People*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁸ ‘My Lords’ comprised the members of the Committee of The Privy Council on Education. A former HMI wrote a disparaging and amusing account of this terminology. ‘My Lords were but a Parliamentary fiction; in theory composed of the Lord President, the First Lord of the Treasury, and some Secretaries of State: in practice they had no existence; but I think the Whitehall staff had by long ‘making believe’ persuaded themselves that they were flesh and blood.’ Sneyd-Kynnersley, *Passages*, p. 112. Accordingly it was the practice of officials in the Education Department to publish the annual Code, to conduct correspondence, and to issue edicts in the name of ‘My Lords’ in a manner calculated to intimidate and silence those who might dare to question its views. Reference to ‘My Lords’ can be found in school log books following the inspector’s annual examination. The report on his visit, issued by the Education Department, might contain a comment such as ‘My Lords regret to observe’, or ‘My Lords will look for a more favourable report next year.’ Sanction from on high would naturally induce consternation among managers and head teachers alike.

Managers examined the several classes of the School, in what subjects, and with what result.

If such examination were periodical, the record would be still more valuable, and would tend to maintain the recurrence of them.

The extent to which the superintendence of the School was maintained by visits of the Managers would also appear.

In the working of the School, most days would suggest some indication to an observant teacher, as to whether this or that class, this or that subject, this or that method, was all that it ought to be; or not, and why. Similarly, fluctuations of attendance, co-operation of parents, and the rates of and modes of taking school-fees, are so many heads under which facts worthy of notice are constantly occurring, and of a different kind in towns and in the country.

The Log Book is not meant to contain essays on these or similar subjects, but to collect the items of experience. A teacher who performs this duty simply, regularly, and with discrimination, will find it a powerful help in mastering his profession, as well as an honourable monument of his labours.

Matthew Arnold, a vociferous critic of the Revised Code, saw the log book as an imposition inflicted upon the school inspectorate. Arnold was himself one of HM Inspectors of Schools (1851-1886) and such was his antagonism towards the new code that he undoubtedly risked his position when, in 1862, in anticipation of how the code would work in practice, he published a lengthy article denouncing 'The Twice-Revised Code' (a reference to the fact that the document placed before Parliament on 13 February 1862 was rapidly amended to a more acceptable form and presented again to Parliament on 28 March 1862). Among Arnold's many concerns about the code was one that, in his opinion, would detract inspectors from more important duties and reduce them 'into a set of registering clerks, with a mass of minute details to tabulate' The inspector 'will just hastily glance round the school, and then he must fall to

work at the 'log-books.' And this to ascertain the precise state of each individual scholar's reading, writing, and arithmetic.' He went on to complain, 'As if there might not be in a school most grave matters needing inspection and correction; as if the whole school might not be going wrong, at the same time that a number of individual scholars might carry off prizes for reading, writing, and arithmetic!'¹⁴⁹

And so 'this new and intimate source of information about the schools' came into being. But the expectation of the civil service mind in the manner in which the log book should be kept was never really understood by that of the teacher. 'The early log-books did not live up to these expectations. They are far less records of 'valuable facts', in the official sense, than jottings that reveal the personal worries and hopes of the teachers.'¹⁵⁰ As Ball has observed, 'They reveal teachers writing unaffectedly, without the self-conscious polish which many of them applied to their speeches and their contributions to periodicals.' But, perhaps in the wake of the Revised Code, which some teachers abhorred, 'A few resented log books and filled their pages (until discouraged by HM Inspector) with O P (ordinary progress) or even N T R (nothing to report).'¹⁵¹ It was a complaint of the Committee of Council that, 'The log-book is often ill and unintelligently kept by the teachers.'¹⁵² In the early days the log book, like the account books and registers, was 'another badly kept record.'¹⁵³ In 1870, HM Inspector Pickard detected 'very great credit' in the keeping of log books by some head teachers, but he came across one where 'page after page contained 'ordinary progress' or 'usual lessons'. At last I saw an entry of more than one line 'April 1st, All Fools' Day. The boys made a fool of me.'¹⁵⁴ It would appear therefore that it took several years before the log book began to function (in most instances) in the prescribed way – that is, as a tool of growing

¹⁴⁹ M. Arnold, 'The Twice-Revised Code.' *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 65, no. 387, (March 1862), pp. 347-65, p. 360.

¹⁵⁰ Sturt, *Education of the People*, p. 266.

¹⁵¹ Ball, *Educating the People*, p. 254.

¹⁵² *Report of The Committee of Council on Education, 1865-66*. PP. 1866, (3666), XXVII.117, xv, 131, pt. 7.

¹⁵³ Hurt, *Education in Evolution*, p. 215.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Hurt, *Education in Evolution*, pp. 215-16.

accountability, and as a means of providing the inspector with a developing picture of the life of the school between his visits.

The manner in which the log book was kept depended very much on the diligence of the principal or head teacher (these titles were interchangeable) who alone was entrusted with the duty of maintaining the record. And while adhering to the general rules and advice concerning its composition the majority appear to have been able to make entries in their log book as they saw fit. Consider the example of Joseph Moore, head master of the Wesleyan Methodist Day School at Wibsey, near Bradford. For 38 years (1870-1908) Moore assiduously maintained his official log book and his entries are unusual in that they record in remarkably revealing detail the writer's personal thoughts and reflections, his hopes and fears, his frustrations and pleasures, in a way that went far beyond the requirement that the document was to be a brief and factual record only. On 13 October 1871, Moore confided in his log book, in a mixed expression of frustration, humour, and irony, 'If it be true that a ship makes most progress in a storm, then it may safely be said that progress has been the order of this week. Every class has manifested a natural ingenuity to do everything the wrong way!' In spite of its brevity the exasperated comment he made on 17 May 1878 speaks volumes. 'The dolts! Oh, the dolts!'¹⁵⁵ In complete contrast, Miss Harriet Bottomley of St. James's Infants' School, Manchester Road, Bradford interpreted over zealously the instructions about the keeping of the log book. Her 43 years (1877-1920) as head mistress are condensed inside 348 pages mostly taken up with recurrent jottings in large handwriting about holiday closures, average attendances, official visits, and other routine facts.¹⁵⁶ Transgressions in the proper keeping of the log book were rare. A comment, observation, or opinion deemed unacceptable was likely to be followed by a note of censure from HM Inspector, especially if the remark was about the inspector or government legislation, as the head master of St. James's Boys' School, Bradford discovered. On 15 December 1877, after receiving the 'parchment report', John Sowden, in disgust it seems, wrote in his

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in A. Robinson, 'Oh, the dolts!', *The New Schoolmaster*, vol. 49, no. 3, (March 1972), pp. 86-7.

¹⁵⁶ St. James's Infants' School log book, pp. 127-474.

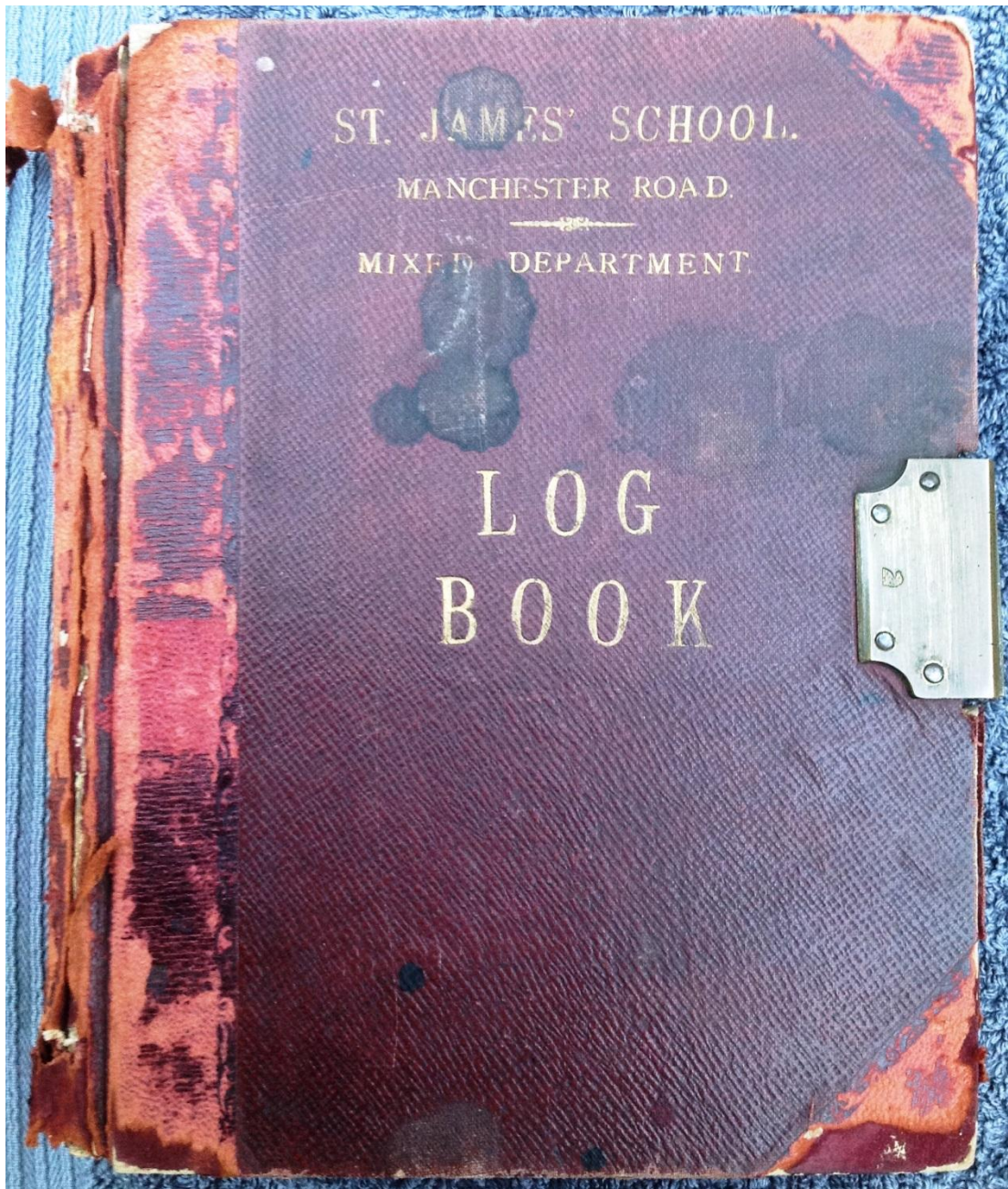
log book in response to the observations of HM Inspector, 'A year of hard, successful work results in a statement that "The boys are orderly & I am glad to find a satisfactory improvement in all the three elementary subjects."' On 7 January 1878, his remark that 'The New Act is a piece of lumber – of very little practical use to Education' was soon rescinded, together with the earlier one, evidently after having been seen by the inspector. He removed the offending comments by means of a conciliatory entry on 11 January 1878: 'In obedience to instructions that Art. 37 must be observed, the entry on Dec. 15th (being 'an opinion of a general character') is withdrawn entirely. The same must be said of the entry on Jan. 7th.'¹⁵⁷ This shows, of course, that the log books were carefully read on the whole. Sowden had earlier been accustomed to expressing his views on official reports and had got away with it. Not satisfied with the views of the inspector in 1871, he observed on 23 March, 'Received "Parchment Report" from the Council Office. "This school continues in a fairly satisfactory state" which may mean anything or nothing according to the view of the reader.'¹⁵⁸

Regulations dictated the recurring themes in the log books, and they were necessarily preoccupied with variations in attendance; discipline; progress with lessons; the teaching complement; the visits of HM Inspector, and his annual reports. But, as an important aside for the student of history, other images emerge about local, social, cultural, and educational matters – for example, the reaction of parents to compulsory education; tensions between religious and secular education; the impact of epidemics, mortality, and poverty on family and school life. In the industrial city of Bradford the demands on child labour and fluctuations in trade and the influence of employers are well documented. In the opening chapter it was explained how these issues emerged through analysis of the log books. In the following pages an attempt will be made to show how these and other seams fuse together to create a picture of the way in which the elementary school system developed in the rapidly expanding town of Bradford during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and how, in particular, the question of attendance was addressed.

¹⁵⁷ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 404-5.

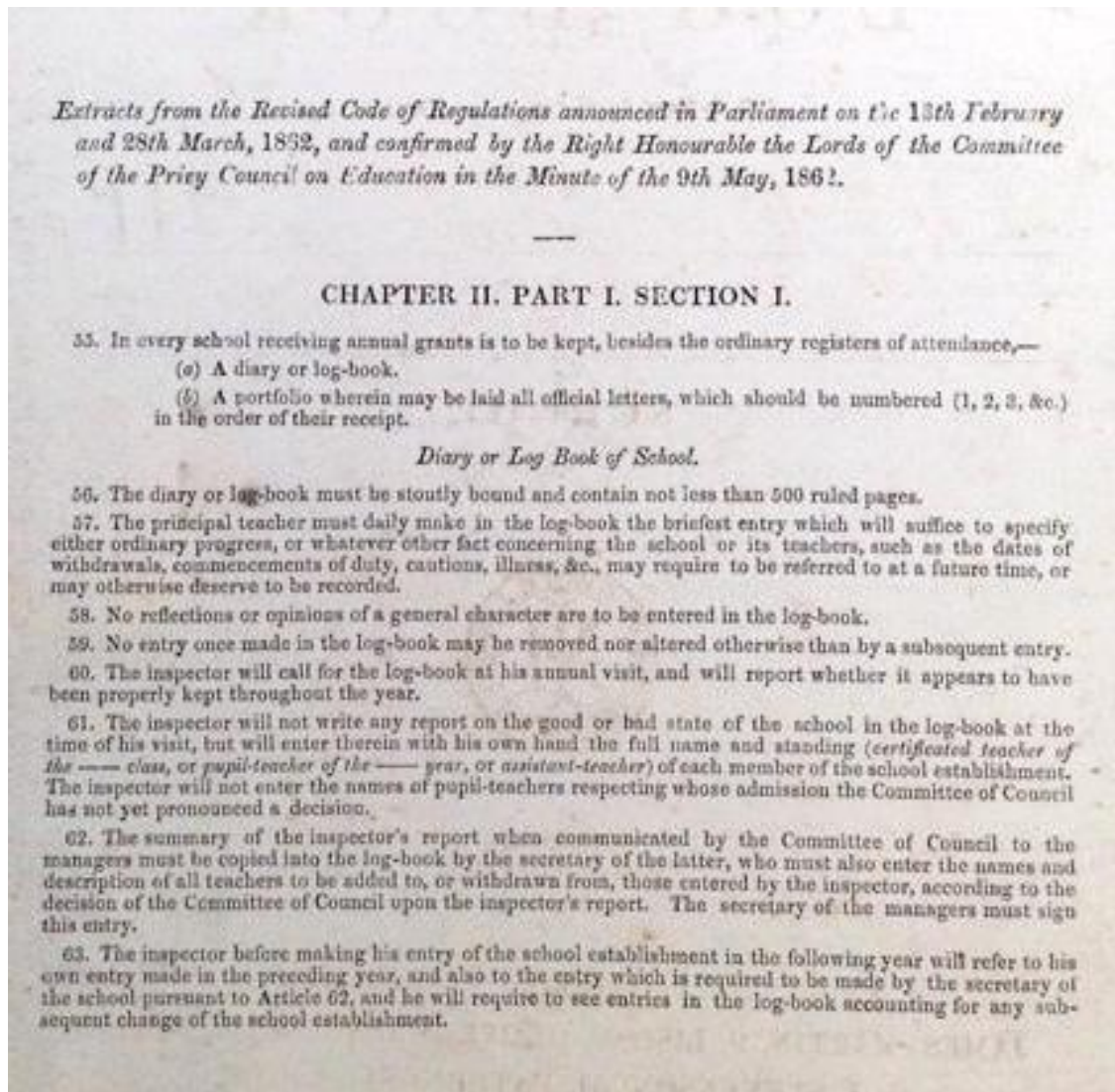
¹⁵⁸ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 290.

Figure 3 - Victorian school log book.



Source: Log book, St. James's Mixed School, Bradford, 1893-1915. The title page reads, *COLLINS' SCHOOL DIARY or LOG BOOK*. London: William Collins, Sons, & Co., Limited, Bridewell Place, New Bridge Street, E.C. It contains 500 rules pages and is unusual in that it was secured with a lock and key to prevent unauthorised access. Author's collection.

Figure 4 - Extracts from the Revised Code 1862 stating the manner in which the school log book must be kept.



Source: Log book, St. James's Boys' School, Bradford, vol. 1, 1863-1886, introductory page. Author's collection.

Figure 5 – Typical entries in an early school log book.

21

May 11.
Monday. A noisy, troublesome and unsatisfactory day, chiefly caused by the stubbornness and disobedience of B. Johnston the elder apprentice. First section had special exercise ~~to~~ in writing letters. Admitted 3 boys including one null-boy from Messrs. Wand & Co. Interviews with parents.

May 12.
Tuesday. There was too much noise and disorder in the school to day. The first section was examined in Scripture, Ch. Catechism, Geography, Reading &c.; the general result was "Moderate". J. Johnson gave a lesson to the first class before the Master, on the sentence "Bread is good for food".

May 13.
Wednesday. Admitted J. W. Calphman from the firm of Messrs. Wand & Co - placed in the first class. Examined the 3rd class in Scripture, Reading, Geography &c. It acquitted it-self "very fairly". Supplied the promoters of a new school in White Abbey with facts regarding numbers in attendance.

May 14.
Thursday. This morning the 1st section of boys as well as the 1st section of girls attended the service in church at 9 o'clock, it being Ascension Day. The 4th 5th & 6th classes had special exercise in writing, and the 4th class was examined in Scripture, Reading &c. The Afternoon was a holiday.

Source: Log book, St. James's Boys' School, Manchester Road, Bradford, vol. 1, p. 21, 11-14 May 1863. Author's collection.

Figure 6 – Typical entries in a late nineteenth century school log book.

458

Aug 15th Reopened school this week.
19th A very poor attendance owing
to Bowling tide.
Is all present and punctual.
Mr. Hanson visited the school
on Tuesday morning.

Aug 22nd Nine admissions this week.
26th Attendance much better this week.
Several Chin returned to school
who were absent many
weeks before the holidays,
consequently they are very
backward.
Miss Clarke gave a Criticism
lesson to five year old Chin
on a "Whelbarrow".

Aug 29th Four admissions this week.
Sep 2nd Miss Norris gave a Criticism
lesson to five year old Chin
on "nuts". Miss Clarke absent
all the week, owing to illness.

Source: Log book, Feversham Street Infants' Board School, Bradford, p. 458,
15 August - 2 September 1892. Author's collection.

Chapter 4

The Battle to Secure Attendance in Bradford

Bradford, perhaps more than any other town or city in the country, experienced particular difficulties during the whole of the Victorian period in the struggle to secure elementary school attendance. As indicated earlier, the predominant reason for this was the dependence to a large extent of its rapidly increasing textile industry upon the employment of several thousands of children whose labour could be had readily and cheaply. This chapter looks at the issues which influenced Bradford's problems and sets them in the national context of elementary school attendance in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

4.1 Elementary School Attendance during the Nineteenth Century.

'Although there must be a large element of doubt about the accuracy of statistics on education which are given for the early part of the 19th Century one must accept, even allowing for a degree of error in such statistics, that a considerable advance was made between 1800 and 1860 in the number of children attending schools in England and Wales.'¹⁵⁹ Pallister was referring to Brougham's House of Commons speech in 1820 in which he enlightened his fellow MPs on statistical data arising from the Parliamentary Committee's Inquiry into the Education of the Lower Orders, 1816.¹⁶⁰ The inquiry had revealed that about one in sixteen of the population of England was receiving some form of elementary education, a considerable advance on the year 1803 when the figures indicated that one in twenty one was on the school roll. By the time the Newcastle Commission reported in 1861, one in 7.7 of the whole population of England and Wales was being educated in day schools. This

¹⁵⁹ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 384.

¹⁶⁰ Hansard, (HC), 2 (Second series), col. 61, 28 June 1820.

equated to 2,535,462 pupils, but as the accuracy of the Commissioners' findings was subsequently brought into question, the figures must be treated with caution.¹⁶¹ And as Pallister points out, 'these averages tell us nothing of the variables involved in their calculation.' More reliable perhaps are the official statistics from 1850 which showed that children employed in Bradford's mills stayed an average of three months in school. As an example of the rapid turnover in pupils Pallister illustrates the case of St. James's National School, Bradford, which was visited by HM Inspector on 5 March 1850. The inspector discovered that during the preceding twelve months 212 children had been admitted and 247 had left, the average attendance being calculated at 108.¹⁶²

The great drive to achieve regular attendance in school came with the introduction of the Revised Code of 1862 when it became the single most important grant-earning device. Article 17 of the Code provided for annual grant support, and Articles 38-47 spelled out the essential attendance qualifications. A pupil had to achieve 200 (100 for half timers) half day attendances which would earn the school four shillings and also qualify him or her for admission to annual examination where successful scholars over six years of age could earn eight shillings, and infants, although not subject to examination, could earn six shillings and sixpence 'subject to a report by the inspector that such children are instructed suitably to their age, and in a manner not to interfere with the instruction of the older children.'¹⁶³ Therefore 'with all notions of compulsory school attendance rejected as inexpedient, the responsibility for a child's schooling lay somewhere between parent and teacher.'¹⁶⁴ The duty of ensuring regularity was far more likely to be that of the teacher since, after 1862, it was the case more often than not that the teacher's salary was partially or wholly dependent on the results obtained in the annual examination, and therefore it was plainly in his or her interest to ensure full classrooms throughout the

¹⁶¹ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, pp. 238-9.

¹⁶² Pallister, 'Determinants', pp. 384-5. The statistical information is taken by the author from the *Minutes of The Committee of The Privy Council on Education, 1850-51*, vol. 2.

¹⁶³ *The Revised Code of Regulations, 1862*, pp. 5 and 8.

¹⁶⁴ Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 8.

year.¹⁶⁵ As Elkington observes, 'No longer the didactic pedagogue, respected by a community which he was able to keep at arms length, the school-master was now expected to search the courts and alleys and knock on cellar doors in his new role as an educational evangelist.'¹⁶⁶ The link between regular attendance and examination success was acutely felt by teachers. 'As a man glanced round his benches in the morning his heart rose or sank as he considered the numbers. Academic preparations for the examination did, indeed, last the year; but there were days of intermission, or the hope of last minute cramming. In the log-books the first concern that shows itself is with attendance. This was still deplorably irregular.'¹⁶⁷ However, the steady increase in average annual attendance from 888,923 in 1862 to 1,048,493 in 1866¹⁶⁸ is indicative of the significant part played by teachers over the increasing awareness by parents of the value of education; the rise in the number of school places; and, to a lesser extent, growing adherence to the requirements of the Factory Acts in the fight to secure improved attendance.

In 1870, schools under government inspection in England and Wales provided places for 1,878,000 children, or a little over half of the estimated requirement. However, the average number of pupils in attendance was only 1,152,000.¹⁶⁹ The Elementary Education Act of 1870, which introduced universal education, did not make it compulsory for children to attend school. The feeling, as noted earlier, was that to introduce a compulsion clause when there were insufficient places available to enforce such a measure would make a mockery of the legislation. As Murphy stated, 'Opponents of compulsion claimed, among other things, that it was morally wrong, savoured of Prussian autocracy, would diminish the freedom of parents (making them irresponsible), and would deprive poor parents of the financial support of their children.'¹⁷⁰ Section 74 of the act left to the proposed school boards the decision on whether to initiate

¹⁶⁵ For discussion on this matter see P. Ellis, 'The Effects of the Revised Code of Education in the West Riding of Yorkshire.' *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, vol. 19, no. 1, part 1, (1987), pp. 1-18.

¹⁶⁶ Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Sturt, *Education of the People*, p. 266.

¹⁶⁸ Sylvester, *Lowe and Education*, p. 82.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, pp. 285-6.

¹⁷⁰ Murphy, *Education Act*, p. 53.

compulsory attendance if and when they saw fit to do so. The difficulty of universal compulsion was compounded by the fact that in vast areas of the country there were no school boards, and the issue of compulsory attendance was fought against a background of political, religious, and financial conflict. A compromise act of 1876 promoted by Lord Sandon introduced the notion of universal attendance through the establishment of school attendance committees in areas where there were no school boards, but, in tune with the latter, the committees were merely empowered, but not compelled, to make bye-laws enforcing attendance at school. In 1880, the new Liberal administration appointed A. J. Mundella to the office of Vice-President of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education and he dispensed immediately with the farce of 'permissive compulsion'. Mundella's Education Bill became law on 26 August 1880. The act required the school boards and school attendance committees forthwith to frame bye-laws to ensure that all children aged between five and ten went to school. To this was added the obligation that an employer who engaged a child under the age of ten years was liable to financial penalty. Fourteen was the age (with few exceptions) at which a child could work full time. Those who framed local bye-laws were left with deciding the fate of the child during the intervening years. In 1893, the upper limit at which a pupil attended school was fixed at eleven, and in 1899 it was raised to twelve.

4.2 The Bradford School Board and Compulsory Attendance.

From the outset it was apparent that attendance was going to be a significant issue in Bradford, and the School Board was acutely aware of this. Above any other single factor affecting attendance was the Bradford textile trade which had grown in strength and competitiveness as much on the dependency of child labour as it had on its geographical location and the enterprise of its merchants. 'The curse of half-time', as Fenn described it, was a phenomenon against which the Board 'waged a continuous campaign' throughout its entire existence.¹⁷¹ As Ittmann has pointed out, the growth in the half-time population was encouraged by the employers. 'Despite statements about the importance of education for the young, Bradford's manufacturers preferred the half-time system for it

¹⁷¹ Fenn, *Development of Education*, pp. 12-13.

helped to ensure a supply of juvenile labor (*sic*).¹⁷² However, Ittmann's claim that the number of half timers 'stood at over 9,000 by 1893' appears to have been considerably overstated when compared with the School Board's more reliable assessment which put the figure at 5,097.¹⁷³ Another very important contributory factor was that of local family tradition. Hurt has asserted that children in Lancashire and Yorkshire during the 1870s worked in the mills not through poverty, but because of the local convention of the cottage industry where children assisted their parents at home at the earliest opportunity. The factories displaced work in the household environment, and although textile operatives were comparatively affluent at that time, it was viewed as being fit and proper that children should help to boost the family income by working as soon as they were able.¹⁷⁴ However, such an assessment would find little supporting evidence in cases involving the huge migration to Bradford and other industrial towns where families had no experience of domestic production, and therefore a different explanation should be sought.

The key influences which conspired unremittingly to challenge the School Board's rules on compulsory attendance are examined in detail in Chapter 5.

At the beginning of 1873, the Bradford School Board, with the approval of Her Majesty in Council, introduced bye-laws making attendance in the borough compulsory for all children between the ages of five and thirteen. On 17 February 1873, the Board opened its first schools in temporary rented premises located in the Bridge Street, Sticker Lane, Little Horton, and New Leeds districts of the town with accommodation for 1,270 pupils. To these it added, during the next few months, four temporary departments at Bradford Moor, Lidget Green, Essex Street, and Tetley Street. Together these eight schools provided 2,992 pupil places to supplement the existing and proposed voluntary provision.¹⁷⁵ However, getting the children into school, and ensuring that they remained there and attended with regularity was another matter. It was one which would occupy the serious attention of the Board throughout its entire existence.

¹⁷² Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, p. 114.

¹⁷³ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 24.

¹⁷⁴ Hurt, *Elementary Schooling*, pp. 190-1.

¹⁷⁵ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, p. 2.

The move to apply bye-laws throughout Bradford to all children (regardless of whether they might at that time or in the future attend Church or Board schools, and without consideration of any religious or non-religious affiliation that they might have) met with the approval of at least one denominational head teacher who wrote in 1873, 'Great numbers of absentees. Sent after them and consequently obtained a better attendance than would otherwise have been the case. If compulsory attendance is to be the rule of the future it is time its application became general.'¹⁷⁶

Having instituted the criterion of compulsory attendance the Board established an Attendance Committee which held its inaugural meeting on 10 December 1873, and thereafter convened at weekly intervals throughout the entire period of existence of the Board. By 23 December, 55 parents had appeared before the committee to explain their reasons for not sending their children to school.

In its report published towards the end of 1873, the Board stated that 2,139 pupils were on the registers in its temporary schools, and that the average attendance was 1,465, or 68.4 per cent. The numbers of children in non-Board schools had increased from 14,204 in March 1871, to 17,065 in April 1873, the average attendances being, respectively, 9,064 (63.8 per cent), and 10,398 (60.9 per cent).¹⁷⁷ The Board felt that the numbers in average attendance formed a better test of the probable value of attendance than the numbers on the registers by indicating the greater regularity and constancy of scholars. However, it did concede that the figures 'may appear to many persons to be very low', but noted that it had followed the Education Department's rule

¹⁷⁶ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 329, 4 June 1873.

¹⁷⁷ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, p. 2. The increase in non-Board school places is explained for the most part by the fact that building grants for schools would cease on 31 December 1870, coupled with widespread alarm among denominationalists throughout the country at the prospect of secular schools. For discussion on the matter see Murphy, *Education Act*, pp. 68-70. The triennially elected school boards, at the end of their period in office, issued in printed form a resume of the work of the various committees in the preceding three years. As might be expected they occasionally present a biased and favourable view of their achievements and should therefore be treated with a degree of caution.

whereby the average figure was achieved by adding together the attendances (of more than two hours each) of all the scholars in a given period, and dividing the sum by the number of times during which the school met in the same period. Half-time children, of whom there were about 5,600, were treated in the calculation as though they had attended full-time.¹⁷⁸

Joseph Tipper, master of the New Leeds Mixed Board School, which met in the Baptist chapel premises in Mulgrave Street, in a densely populated and poor district of the town, recorded in his log book on 19 February 1873, three days after the opening of the school, that twelve pupils had been entered in the upper (mixed) section, and 28 in the infants' department. During the following months Mr Tipper observed the frequency with which pupils were admitted and withdrawn, noting on 2 April that '.... the attendance is somewhat irregular', and, on 16 April, 'Attendance very meagre.' On 5 November he was able to report for the first time that numbers in the upper department had reached more than 70.¹⁷⁹ That figure had been boosted by the transference of nine scholars from the infants' section where earlier, at the commencement of the new term on 28 July, 41 children were found to be present.¹⁸⁰ The New Leeds School had approved capacity for 373 pupils,¹⁸¹ a figure that the Board no doubt deemed appropriate *pro tem* following its own census of 1871. In fact, it was in the process of erecting a permanent building in nearby Feversham Street with accommodation for 899 pupils.¹⁸²

This was not, perhaps, the best start that the Board had envisaged in its determination to secure universal attendance at the earliest opportunity, but having introduced bye-laws and established schools in areas of most need the Board sought to tackle the problem of non and irregular attendance by appointing in April 1873 five 'school officers' in accordance with Section 36 of the 1870 Act. These would become known colloquially as 'persuaders', 'enforcers' or, popularly and singularly, as 'the Board man'. In the most densely populated areas of the borough where there was a choice of school were

¹⁷⁸ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁹ New Leeds Mixed School log book, pp. 1 and 3.

¹⁸⁰ New Leeds Infants' School log book, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, p. 2.

¹⁸² BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 105.

11,341 homes to which, in the period from April to October, the attendance officers paid more than 25,000 visits. Their inquiries revealed that that there were 18,240 children eligible to be in school, and that according to their parents 12,513 were attending some form of educational establishment whether public elementary or private adventure. 'As, however, many parents have a very imperfect idea as to what constitutes 'attendance', their statements must be received with some reservation.'¹⁸³ Clearly the Board faced a huge challenge in reining in the thousands of children who were evading the force of its bye-laws, but it was not unaware of the social, economic, and domestic circumstances which militated against its mission. When the School Management Committee invited parents to appear before it to give their reasons for not sending their children to school it found that 'the chief hindrances to education are the indifference of parents, the desire of employers to obtain child labour, the claims of home work, the unwillingness of children to go to school, and the ailments to which they are subject.' Although there were a few cases of genuine poverty, it transpired that the cost of the weekly school pence was not a discouragement. Rather it was 'more reluctance on the part of parents to lose the work and wages of the children than the inability to pay the school fees.'¹⁸⁴

The expediency of forming an Attendance Committee was quickly proven. The committee began business in earnest by issuing nine summonses, and imposing fines of five and ten shillings on neglectful parents. In January 1874, a letter was sent to the Sub-Inspector of Factories calling his attention to children who were working half-time in the mills but whom, in contravention of the Factory Act, were not attending school.¹⁸⁵ On 13 April 1874, the Board opened its first purpose-built school at Bowling Back Lane. This was rapidly followed on 11 May and 15 June by new buildings at Lilycroft and Whetley Lane, and on 10 August a further five new schools began work at Barkerend and Horton Bank Top, and in Ryan, Lorne, and Feversham Streets. These eight impressive sandstone structures, with high pitch sloping roofs and gothic adornments, situated in heavily populated districts of the town provided permanent

¹⁸³ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, p. 3.

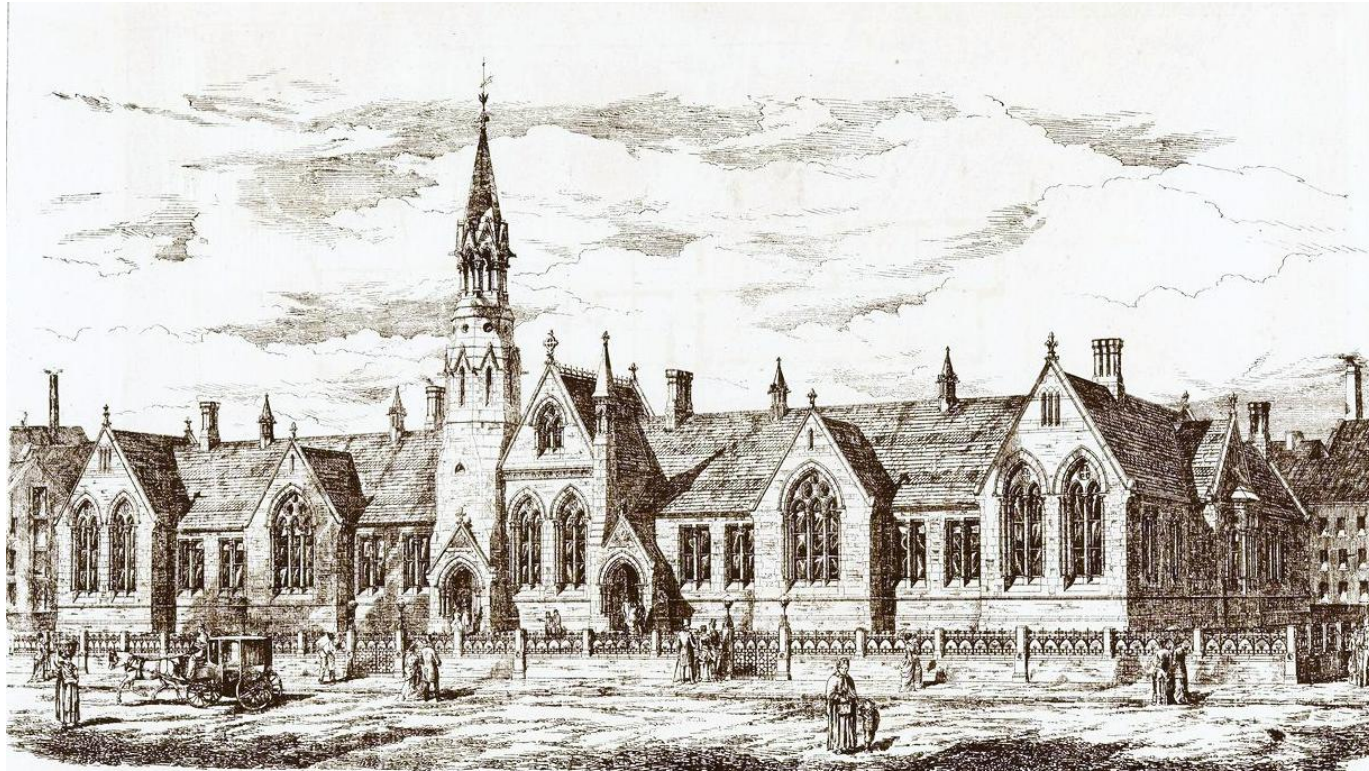
¹⁸⁴ BSB, *Report 1871-73*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ BSB, *School Attendance Committee* (hereafter BSB, SAC), *Minutes*, vol. 1, pp. 2, 15 December 1873; 4, 23 December 1873; and 7, 13 January 1874.

accommodation for 5,365 pupils.¹⁸⁶ Lest parents were in any doubt about the purpose of the buildings the School Board printed and displayed about the town 300 large posters informing the public of its intention to continue to enforce the bye-laws governing compulsory attendance. At the end of 1876, the Board published a statistical analysis of elementary school attendance in the borough during the preceding three years.

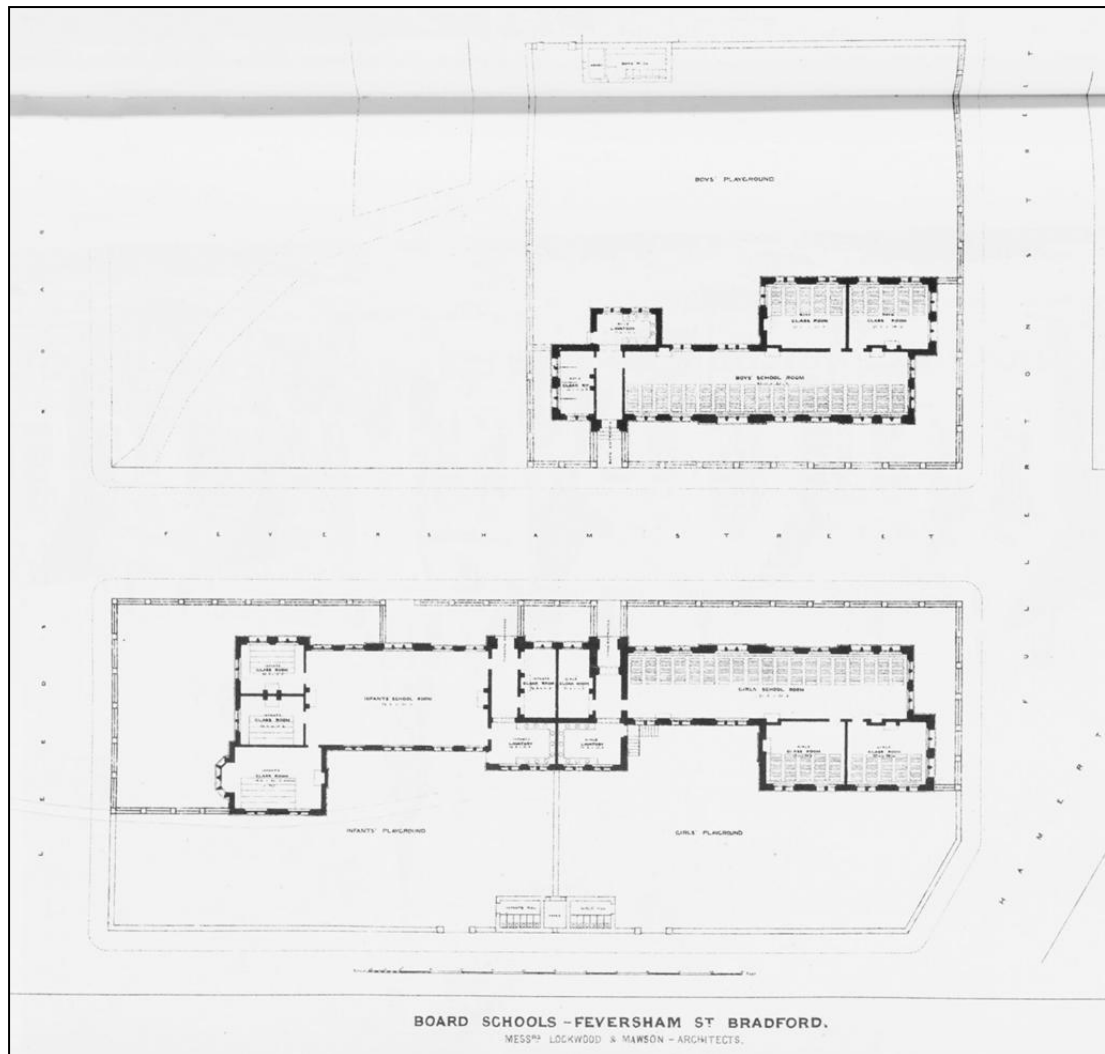
¹⁸⁶ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, pp.104-05.

Figure 7 - Feversham Street Board Schools, Bradford, opened 10 August 1874. Architects: Lockwood and Mawson, Bradford. Architects' drawing of the infants' and girls' schools.



Source: '*The Architect*', vol. 11, 24 January 1874, plate between pp. 48-9. Royal Institute of British Architects, Library, Books, and Periodicals Collection.

Figure 8 - Feversham Street Board Schools, Bradford. Architects' floor plan of the boys', and the infants' and girls' schools.



Source: *'The Architect'*, vol. 11, 24 January 1874, plate between pp. 48-9. Royal Institute of British Architects, Library, Books, and Periodicals Collection.

The total cost (inclusive of land) was £24,510 1s 9d. (BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 105). It would remain the single most expensive building project undertaken by the Bradford School Board. On 3 April 1876, the first 'advanced elementary school' in the country was established on the premises formerly occupied by the boys' department. (BSB, *Report 1876-79*, p. 17). Higher grade schools, as they were better known, would become the subject of legal debate, and were one of the main reasons for the demise of the school board system in 1903.

Table 4. Attendance at Public Elementary Schools, 1873-76.

	December, 1873.			June, 1874.			December, 1874.		
	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total
No. on Register	2210	20386	22596	4285	20813	25098	6983	19566	26549
No. in Actual Attendance	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
No. in Average Attendance	1456	12143	13599	2705	12085	14790	4068	10984	15052
Percentage of Average No. in Attendance	65.8	59.5	62.5	63.1	58.0	58.9	58.2	56.6	56.6

	June, 1875.			November, 1875.			June, 1876.			November, 1876.		
	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total	Board Schools	Other Schools	Total
No. on Register	7364	20479	27843	7419	19772	27191	8391	21589	29980	8934	20791	29725
No. in Actual Attendance	...	...	...	...	...	...	7412	18337	25749	7697	18318	26015
No. in Average Attendance	4716	12469	17185	4626	12427	17053	5456	13183	18639	5646	13231	18877
Percentage of Average No. in Attendance	64.0	60.0	62.0	62.3	62.8	62.6	65.0	61.0	62.8	63.1	63.1	63.1

Source: BSB, *Report 1873-76*, p. 24.

The School Attendance Committee (as it was formally designated) was unremitting in its mission and was prepared to rise to any and all challenges. The vigour and determination with which the committee pursued its obligations is evident from the meticulous account of the activities of its ten officers during the period of the sixth Board.

Table 5. Summary of Attendance Officers' Work for Three Years Ended September 1888.

	House to House Visitation.		Irregular Attendants Visited. (Returns from Schools).		New Families taken (In addition to those found in House to House Visitation).	
	Numbers of Visits.		Numbers of Visits.		Number of Visits.	
	Parents.	Children.	Parents.	Children.	Parents.	Children.
1886	25820	64497	47503	50234	-----	-----
1887	24337	59767	54557	58050	----	-----
1888	23453	56540	55975	59587	1591	4141
	73610	180804	158035	167871	1591	4141

	Schools Visited.		Children in the Streets.		Other Visitations.	
	Numbers of Visits.		Numbers of Visits.			
	Schools.	Children.	Parents.	Children.	Parents.	Children.
1886	2765	6162	2758	5542	5637	8626
1887	3492	7814	2634	5681	8133	13812
1888	3572	8991	2764	5666	6261	8245
	9829	22967	8156	16889	20031	30683

	Numbers of Notices served.		Summons Cases.		Total Number of Visits of every description.		
	Schools.	Children.	Parents.	Children.	Schools.	Parents.	Children.
1886	1649	1997	732	873	2765	84099	137931
1887	1469	1843	850	1007	3492	91980	147974
1888	1340	1675	840	1010	3572	92224	145855
	4458	5515	2422	2890	9829	268303	431760

Source: BSB, *Report 1886-89*, pp. 44-5.

Nationally, the expansion in the provision of elementary education in the last three decades of the nineteenth century saw pupil numbers rise in inspected elementary schools from just over one million in 1870, to four millions in 1881 (soon after the introduction of compulsion), to four and three quarter millions in 1891, and to five and three quarter millions in 1900. In the years 1881, 1891, and 1900, percentage average attendances rose 71 to 78, and then to 82 per cent respectively, although the figures were depressed by the irregular attendance of infant pupils. In 1900, older scholars were achieving 87.5 per cent attendance nationally.¹⁸⁷ Compared with 1870, average school life in 1897 in inspected elementary schools rose from 2.55 years to 7.05 years.¹⁸⁸

The School Board declared in 1888 that 'Bradford has more half-timers than any other town in the Kingdom.' In terms of numbers of children on the registers this was true with 7,018 compared with the next largest Blackburn at 5,396, and Burnley at 2,823. However, in terms of percentages of children in attendance the figures were Blackburn 24, Burnley 20.12, and Bradford 18.06.¹⁸⁹ (See Chapter 5, Table 7 for statistical analysis of half timers in selected municipalities).

In September 1888, the total number of children on the registers of Bradford schools was 40,735. Of these, 23,984 were at Board schools; 12,331 were at Protestant Denominational schools; and 4,420 were at Roman Catholic schools, and in the three years ending on 31 October 1888, the 'Board men' had acted upon 160,983 reports by teachers of irregular attendance.¹⁹⁰ It was during this period that the School Attendance Committee had cause to circularise heads 'pointing out that in some instances it is feared that bad cases of irregular attendance are not reported while cases not so urgent and which might be dealt with by the teachers themselves were pressed prominently forward.'¹⁹¹

Although annual figures for attendance among Bradford's elementary school children had shown gradual overall improvement up to 1888, progress was

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 313.

¹⁸⁸ Wardle, *Rise of Schooled Society*, p. 18.

¹⁸⁹ BSB, *Report 1882-85*, p. 51.

¹⁹⁰ BSB, *Report 1882-85*, p. 45.

¹⁹¹ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, pp. 160-1, 25 October 1887.

painfully slow and was marked by the occasional fluctuation. In 1875, the first year in which the School Board was able to glean a complete picture of attendance throughout the Borough, the annual rate was 62.6 per cent. This increased to 71.5 per cent in 1881 and to 75.1 per cent in 1886. In 1889, however, the figure fell to 74.28 per cent, and in 1891 it reached a high of 77.71 per cent.¹⁹² During the three year period 1889-1891, 12,306 cases relating to irregularity of attendance among 40,864 pupils were brought before the committee. The vast majority of these arose out of 192,506 instances referred by teachers to the eleven school attendance officers employed by the Board.¹⁹³ Therefore Wardle's assertions that by 1880 'average attendance was of the order of 90 per cent' and that 'mass truancy had been overcome'¹⁹⁴ was clearly not the experience in Bradford.

The work of the School Attendance Committee throughout the 1890s indicates a spirit of great determination and sustained effort to tackle the persistent problem of irregular attendance and truancy. The minutes and reports of the committee bear testimony to the zeal and resolve with which it continued to pursue its obligations. Although in 1891 the committee pronounced itself to be satisfied with the number of children attending school, it was clearly far from content with the regularity of their attendance. This matter now occupied the 'supreme' interest of the committee 'all the more so, as the bringing up of the average attendance so as to compare favourably with the number in actual attendance greatly influences the amount of grant to be received from the government.' In an attempt to encourage children to attend school without interruption the Board instituted the award of prizes to pupils and, in an unprecedented move, called a conference of teachers to hear their suggestions for improvement. 'In short, any means whereby the parents could be induced to take greater interest in the welfare of their children.'¹⁹⁵

The purpose of the Education Act 1891 was to give parents entitlement to free elementary education for their children. The introduction to schools of the 'fee

¹⁹² BSB, *Report 1888-91*, p. 65.

¹⁹³ BSB, *Report 1888-91*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁴ Wardle, *English Popular Education*, pp. 36 and 70.

¹⁹⁵ BSB, *Report 1888-91*, p. 43.

grant' of ten shillings per child was equivalent to the amount on average currently paid per annum by parents. This meant that fees could either be abolished or reduced by that amount. 'A clause in the Act empowered any parent to demand free education for his child and, since voluntary schools could not be compelled to provide this, a further requirement was that where free education would not otherwise be available a new board school should be established.'¹⁹⁶ The head master of St. James's National School foresaw in the new legislation unfortunate consequences for the voluntary schools. "Free Education" begins on Monday. It has been decided that the children attending the Boys' & Girls' Departments shall pay a fee of one penny per week. This will not meet the loss caused by the Abolition of Fees, and the probability is that most of the Denominational (not R. Catholic) Schools in Bradford will either come under the Bradford School Board or be closed.' His dismay was compounded: 'As the Bradford School Board gave a General Holiday we were compelled to celebrate our probable downfall by doing the same.'¹⁹⁷ At the boys' Board school in Feversham Street several children were admitted from the nearby Parish Church and Holy Trinity National schools where fees remained in force.¹⁹⁸

Notwithstanding the provisions of the 1891 Act, any hopes that the School Board might have entertained with regard to a lasting improvement in attendance were soon dashed. Scarcely fourteen months after dispensing with 'the pence', one head teacher felt compelled to write, 'At this moment the attendance throughout the Borough is most disappointing. The people do not appear to value Free Education as our rulers seem to expect.'¹⁹⁹ In response to an enquiry from the National Union of Teachers about the effect on attendance of the recent act, the School Attendance Committee stated that 'the abolition of fees has exercised no influence upon the attendance of the children', and placed the blame for continuing irregularity on the magistrates remarking that

¹⁹⁶ Murphy, *Church, State and Schools*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁷ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 70, 28 August 1891 and 31 August 1891.

¹⁹⁸ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 305, 4 September 1891.

¹⁹⁹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 89, 28 October 1892.

they 'should exercise greater vigour.'²⁰⁰ In the summer of 1893, a deputation from the Bradford Teachers' Representative Association called upon the committee advising that teachers generally had ceased to punish scholars for acts of truancy and that unauthorised absenteeism had increased, and it suggested that the Board should establish a truants' industrial school for habitual offenders.

In 1892, the average number of pupils in attendance was 75.82 per cent, a decrease of almost two per cent on the previous year's figure²⁰¹ and the School Board was once more obliged to resort to issuing placards and handbills, and to placing newspaper advertisements as a means of appealing to parents 'to improve the present bad attendance of children at school.'²⁰² The explanation for this downturn in attendance appears to have been a sudden reversal in the fortunes of local textile manufacture, and a further indication of how the two were closely related. 'Owing to bad trade our numbers are going down very quickly. This is shown by the very large number of removals caused by the fathers being out of work; also by the decrease in the number of half timers especially at Anderton's where most of our half timers are only working two or three half days per week. Further, they are not "setting on" any more half timers. Since the holidays I think our average attendance must have fallen twenty.'²⁰³ Handbills about the importance of regular attendance in school were again issued in December 1894, and the exercise was repeated in May 1895 when a noticeable trend in absences developed on Mondays and Fridays.²⁰⁴

Between 1895 and 1900, the percentage average attendance in all elementary schools in Bradford showed an increase from 79.15 to 83.06.²⁰⁵ Three years later, during the final year of its existence, the Bradford School Board was in self-congratulatory mood. 'The [School Attendance] Committee observe with pleasure the high percentage of average attendance attained at all Public

²⁰⁰ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, p. 568, 24 January 1893.

²⁰¹ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 155.

²⁰² BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, p. 560, 20 December 1892.

²⁰³ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 322, 26 August 1892.

²⁰⁴ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, p. 560; vol. 4, p. 158, 7 May 1895.

²⁰⁵ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 155.

Elementary Schools in the City for the three weeks ended 24th April, 1903.' The statistical data was proudly presented in tabulated form.

Table 6. Average Attendance at Public Elementary Schools in Bradford for the three weeks ended 24 April 1903.

	Board Schools.	Other Schools.	Total.
Average No. on Registers.	33259	15372	48631
No. in Average Attendance.	28852	12525	41377
No. of Half-timers.	2169	1202	3371
Percentage of Average No. in Attendance to No. on Registers.	86.74	81.47	85.08
Percentage of Average Attendance with allowance for Half-timers.	89.67	84.79	88.13

Source: BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 145.

'These figures', observed the School Attendance Committee, 'constitute a record in the history of school attendance at Public Elementary Schools in Bradford, and, in themselves, are suggestive of the completeness and effective working of the system of visitation of irregular attendants, which is now in operation.' Although the figure of 88.13 per cent total attendance for the period examined was indeed a record, the actual figure for the whole of 1903 was 85.94 per cent.²⁰⁶ (The way in which the Bradford School Board calculated its statistics is not known and therefore it is not possible to compare with any certainty of accuracy its results with the national data quoted by Smith, above. In the analysis for 1900, for example, 82 per cent average attendance was achieved nationally – a figure that was considerably depressed by the greater irregularity of infant pupils. In Bradford the figure was 83.06 per cent which indicates on the face of it better achievement locally if the calculation included infant scholars). The committee was gratified also to note that the number of police court prosecutions during the years 1900-1903 had decreased

²⁰⁶ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 24.

significantly to 1,896 compared with the period 1897-1900 when the figure stood at 2,191.²⁰⁷

By the turn of the century the incidence of comment in school log books on attendance of pupils is much less in evidence as the long standing preoccupation with it gradually diminished in the wake of improving statistics and more enlightened schoolroom practices. After a generation of being embedded in the public mind as a permanent feature of everyday life; and as the value of education was better appreciated by parents; and as legislation progressively increased the school leaving age (from 1900, local authorities were permitted to raise the age from thirteen to fourteen), and the age of partial exemption was increased (to twelve on 1 January 1900), attendance became less of an obsession with teachers, although it did remain in the background as an irritation likely to raise its head from time to time for many years to come. Crucially, also, in the wake of the 1888 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts* (The Cross Report), and the actions of a modernised and increasingly progressive Education Department as exemplified by the Code of 1890 (which paved the way for the total abolition in 1897 of the last remnants of the much criticised Revised Code), the focus shifted well beyond the tradition of the Three Rs to embrace an expanding curriculum designed to enhance and broaden pupils' knowledge and make school life more interesting and more rewarding.

The following chapter will explore many of the problems associated with attendance that were a familiar feature of school life for local head teachers in the 40 years from its sudden elevation to great importance under the Revised Code of 1862, to the demise of the School Board system in 1903.

²⁰⁷ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 145

Chapter 5

Problems Associated With Poor Attendance

5.1 'This constant struggle.'

The attendance is still very low. We do everything we can & nothing seems to mend it. It is the parents that are at fault & the attendance officers say that neither threats nor summoning seems to have any effect. Yet we are expected to do as well as other schools where the attendance is 20 p.c. better. It is heartbreaking work to most of the teachers, this constant struggle with indifferent parents & consequently lazy & indifferent boys. The work is generally satisfactory if these bad attenders & migratory children were eliminated. We have such a large proportion of the children of the permanently poor people of the town; people who are everlastingly poor be the trade of the town good, as it is now, or bad, & this class of people are constantly shifting from place to place, here to-day, gone tomorrow.²⁰⁸

The head master's note of frustration about poor attendance in the log book of Feversham Street Boys' Board School, Bradford, on 13 September 1895, is one of many similar entries made by J. W. Stansfield during his tenure of office from 1887 to 1904. This school was located about half a mile from the town hall on the main Leeds Road thoroughfare in an area where heavy industry and poor housing competed for space. Mr Stansfield highlights a number of endemic problems routinely encountered by all in his profession locally – the indifference of parents and pupils; the (alleged) ineffectualness of attendance officers; poverty; migration; and employment. Elsewhere he refers frequently to influences which brought about bad attendance, among them the prevalence of sickness and infectious diseases; cleaning at home; fairs, tides, and menageries; newspaper selling; want of footwear; political elections; and boys who were 'knocked from pillar to post.' Even Fridays were good enough reason

²⁰⁸ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, pp. 378-9.

for some to shorten the school week by simply not turning up. On Thursday, 18 May 1899, the day on which the school broke up for the Whitsuntide holidays, his exasperation is evident when he records, 'Attendance shocking especially in St. 0 (69%) & III.b. (73%). No less than 30 boys have not been near school this week. We have sent out hundreds of enquiries during the week & the excuses are frivolous to a degree & many of them are utterly false.'²⁰⁹ J. E. Smart, head master of St. James's Mixed National School, a few hundred yards distant from Feversham Street, observed an attendance of 86 per cent for the week ending 3 July 1903. 'This seems to be as high as we can reach in spite of all our endeavours to exceed it.' He reflected that the highest recorded attendance at the school in earlier years was 90.8 per cent in the month of March 1898, and remarked that 'This speaks volumes for the state of attendance in this district.'²¹⁰

The recurring problems that were the cause of most concern to Bradford teachers are discussed here.

5.2 The Half Timer.

Although referred to in most studies about nineteenth century working class education, the half timer appears to be neglected as the subject of serious academic research. This is perhaps due to the fact that half-time education was a largely localised phenomenon, and also to there being a great want of historical information from those who experienced first-hand the practice of half-time labour and schooling. In Bradford, however, where the School Board opened schools to cater specifically for the half timer, that category of pupil featured prominently throughout the period embracing this present study. The log books refer frequently to the (usually) problematic issue of half-time education, and serve in part both to counter the academic neglect and to give some insight, from the perspective of the teacher at least, into how the system affected school life and local communities in general.

²⁰⁹ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 440.

²¹⁰ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 263. (St. James's Boys' and Girls' Schools were amalgamated in October 1893).

The student of half-time work and education can refer to a few early studies: A contemporary report by Sandiford, written in 1907 towards the close of the half-time period, investigated the history of the half-time system and how it had impacted on the textile industry.²¹¹ More than 40 years ago the Frows published their study of the half-time system in education which examined trade union interest in the movement. In 1977, Silver traced the origins of half-time legislation looking especially at how its educational implications developed and how they affected the children.²¹² A later survey is Pressley's 1994 thesis which offers an appraisal of the half-time issue as it affected Bradford.²¹³

The roots and principles of half-time education nationally can be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century through a succession of factory acts. The 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, although largely ineffectual according to Smith,²¹⁴ introduced the notion that children employed in cotton mills should be given access to a basic education. The Factory Act of 1833 forbade the employment of children under nine years of age (except in silk mills), and made compulsory the attendance at some school, by arrangement of the employer, those children aged between nine and thirteen. Silver states that even after 1833 'progress was slow and sporadic', but he quotes the rare comment of a visitor to Wood and Walker's mill school in Bradford in 1841 where the 'generous school provisions' were ones which the school master 'evidently took a pleasure in showing me.'²¹⁵ By the time of the 1844 Factory Act, the half timer was firmly established as a feature of the cotton and textile industries of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where children between the ages of eight and thirteen were permitted to work in the mills for six and a half hours a

²¹¹ P. Sandiford, 'The Half-Time System in the Textile Trades.' In M. Sadler, (ed.) *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere: Their Place in the Educational System of an Industrial and Commercial State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1907), pp. 318-51.

²¹² H. Silver, 'Ideology and the Factory Child: Attitudes to Half-Time Education.' In P. McCann, (ed.) *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 141-66.

²¹³ J. Pressley, 'Aspects of the Half-Time System in Bradford and District 1870-1922.' (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1994).

²¹⁴ Smith, *English Elementary Education*, p. 107.

²¹⁵ W. Dodd, *The Factory System Illustrated in a Series of Letters to the Right Hon. Lord Ashley* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 41. (First published in London, 1842). Quoted in Silver, 'Ideology', p. 143.

day provided that they spent three full days or six half days in school. Long after the passage of the 1870 Elementary Education Act, legislation governing attendance at school derived from a variety of factory and education acts. 'As a result the half-time system remained embedded, to bedevil the whole matter of fixing and raising a leaving age, until it was finally abolished by the Education Act of 1918.'²¹⁶

Bradford nurtured the tradition of the child worker in the cottage industry of hand loom weaving which was entrenched by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which underpinned the town's future identity as the centre of international worsted manufacture. It was a natural progression among long-established local families that as the production of cloth moved away from the home and into the rapidly increasing mechanised mills the child too should move and continue to contribute to the family income. Ittmann maintained that 'in Bradford the working-class family existed in a symbiotic relationship with the worsted trade.' He has also observed that between 1851 and 1881 the overall participation rate of children aged nine to thirteen employed locally declined from 49.5 per cent to 20.5 per cent which he attributes in part to the 1870 act and to a fall in the birth rate during the 1870s. However, participation rates for the same category of child actually rose during the ten year period 1861 to 1871 from 32.4 per cent to 44.2 per cent as manufacturers actively recruited children to satisfy the rapidly increasing demand for textiles during the boom years of the late 1860s and early 1870s.²¹⁷

By the time of the 1870 act the 'half timer' (who had no official title, and was always referred to as such) was commonly acknowledged as a child whose day was divided between work and school. From the outset of compulsory elementary education in Bradford in 1873-74, one category of child who never received the benefit of sustained regular attendance at school was the half timer. In the opinion of one source, 'It was a great evil, affecting both the

²¹⁶ B. Simon, *Education and Labour Movement 1870-1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), p. 138.

²¹⁷ Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, pp. 198-200.

physical well-being and the intellectual progress of the child, with little gain in return.²¹⁸

In Bradford the half timer's place of work, with very few exceptions, was the textile mill, and in the days before the School Board the term 'school' covered a diverse range of institutions. In 1859, the official number of half timers in Bradford was 1,505, and in 1870 the figure was 5,700.²¹⁹ In November 1875, by which time the effect of bye-laws requiring compulsory attendance was apparent, there were 9,732 half-time children in the borough, of whom 2,452 (slightly more than one third) were attending the newly established Board schools, with the majority of 7,280 attending some other form of school. At that time there were 27,191 children in total on the registers of all schools in Bradford.²²⁰ Therefore 35.79 per cent of scholars aged nine years and above were employed as half timers. By 1887, when the School Attendance Committee circularised large school boards to obtain comparisons in the number of half timers per head of school population, the number had fallen.

²¹⁸ *Education in Bradford*, p. 11.

²¹⁹ Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, p. 114.

²²⁰ BSB, *Report 1873-76*, pp. 8 and 12.

Table 7. Proportion of half timers in selected large towns, 1887.

Town	No. on roll	No. of Half Timers	Percentage of Half Timers	Half Time Standards
Blackburn	22592	5396	23.88	III
Burnley	14028	2823	20.12	III
Bradford	38842	7018	18.06	III
Oldham	23300	4040	17.3	III
Bury	11000	1567	14.24	III
Bolton	23152	2858	12.34	III
Leicester	24743	3006	12.15	III
Huddersfield	16138	786	4.87	IV
Nottingham	39114	1697	4.32	III
Salford	33450	603	1.8	III
Leeds	60883	1079	1.77	IV
Manchester	71866	735	1.02	III
Sheffield	54818	250	.45	IV
Hull	30600	100	.32	IV
London	607166	1450	.24	IV
Birmingham	72089	169	.23	IV

Source: BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, p. 103, 8 March 1887.

It will be seen from Table 7 that Bradford had by far the highest number of half timers in 1887, but that in percentage terms it was behind the Lancashire cotton manufacturing towns of Blackburn and Burnley, and fractionally ahead of Oldham. Huddersfield, in the heavy woollen district and ten miles south of Bradford, had very few half timers, while Leeds, seven miles to the east of Bradford, with its more diverse range of industries, had only fifteen per cent of the number in Bradford. In London, scarcely one in four hundred pupils was engaged in half-time employment. If the assumption is made that the Bradford School Board approached and had responses from all towns and cities it believed to have high incidences of half-time employment among scholars then the statement that the town had proportionately the largest number of half timers in the kingdom would appear to be justified. Fenn asserts of the half-time system that 'Bradford became its most powerful stronghold in the whole of

England',²²¹ a claim backed up by Pressley,²²² and acknowledged by the School Board as being 'almost exceptional'.²²³

The Bradford School Board constantly had the welfare of the half timer at heart, and always acted in his or her interests,²²⁴ although contested by Pressley,²²⁵ appears, on the whole, to be an accurate reflection of the Board's unwavering mission, if its triennial reports are to be believed.

An indication of how inherent a feature of school life the half-time system had become at the time when the School Board began its work is evident from statistics compiled in 1871 by the head master of one school, the Parish Church Boys' department. This National school was located in yet another densely populated and poor quarter of central Bradford and was bounded on all sides by textile mills. The following table shows also the names of the manufacturers located in the vicinity which together employed 89 per cent of the boys.

²²¹ Fenn, *Development of Education*, p. 12.

²²² Pressley, 'Aspects of the Half-Time System', p. 2.

²²³ BSB, *Report 1882-85*, p. 46.

²²⁴ *Education in Bradford*, p. 11.

²²⁵ Pressley, 'Aspects of the Half-Time System', pp. 9-10.

Table 8. Half-time pupils and their employers and day pupils at the Parish Church Boys' School, Bradford, 1871.

Mill Boys		Day Boys	
Leather's	39	1 st Class	1
Rouse's	105	2 nd "	0
Mason's	57	3 rd "	5
Eagles	5	4 th "	15
Wade's	20	5 th "	7
Armitage & Ibbotson	29	6 th "	10
Ambler's	27		
Mossmans	7		
Armstrong's	5		
Ryders	4		
Mitchells	1		
Smiths	1		
Leemings	1		
Total	301	Total	38

Source: Parish Church Boys' School log book, p.141, 6 December 1871.

Throughout its existence the Bradford School Board agonised over the vexed question of the half-time system. While the Board may well have had the interests of the half timer at heart, it was torn between pressure from the Education Department and its own teachers to raise to the maximum possible level the age at which children could work part-time or full-time, and the ever present demands of many parents to send their children to work at the earliest opportunity, and local industry which required cheap child labour to keep costs low and to maximise profits. Section 74 of the Elementary Education Act 1870 empowered school boards under the provision of bye-laws to determine locally the age at which children could be partially or fully exempted from full-time education if satisfied that they had reached the age of ten and had achieved a standard of education specified in the bye-laws. From August 1874, the Board 'applied themselves earnestly to the task of bringing the neglected children within the influence of the schools'²²⁶ when all children of elementary school age - from five to twelve - with certain exceptions were required to attend school. But the legal position on half-time education continued to be unclear

²²⁶ BSB, *Report 1873-76*, p. 9.

and legal disputes arising out of local bye-laws persisted nationally throughout the school board period as a result of confusion between the clauses of the factory acts and the education acts. Parity in the school leaving age was not achieved until 1893 when the minimum school leaving age was set at eleven. However, as Ellis has pointed out, 'a defect persisted in the law as it applied to 'half-time' education, for in practice the children only attended school when they were actually employed, but tended to be absent in periods of unemployment.'²²⁷

The Board subjected the half timer to a series of changing criteria to determine his or her qualification for part or full-time exemption for the purposes of legal employment. In 1875 it fixed partial exemption at Standard V, and full exemption at Standard VI, providing that certain levels of proficiency had been achieved by the pupil. In 1880, having 'succumbed to local economic pressures from both employers and parents',²²⁸ the Board reduced the qualifying criteria to Standards II and V respectively, but thereafter maintained or raised them. From 1886, the issue of labour certificates was dependant on success in the examinations 'at the cost of a good deal of local opposition.'²²⁹

²²⁷ Ellis, 'Influences', p. 314.

²²⁸ A. Elliott, 'The Bradford School Board and the Department of Education 1870-1902: Areas of Conflict.' *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, vol. XIII, no. 2, (July 1981), pp. 18-23, p. 18.

²²⁹ *Education in Bradford*, p. 11.

Table 9. Exemption levels for half-time and full-time employment in Bradford, 1875-1901.

Year	Standard for half time exemption	Standard for full time exemption	Standard for half time exemption at 13.
1875	V	VI	
1880	II	V	IV
1882	III	VI	IV
1891	III	VI	IV
1895	IV	VI	
1901	V	VII	

Source: Pressley, 'Aspects of the Half-Time System', p. 14.

In 1903, the last year of the School Board's existence, the conditions to be met for total exemption from school were that the child must be over the age of twelve, and have passed HMI's special exemption examination in the seventh standard (unless employed under the Factory and Workshop Acts or the Mines Act in which case they had to be over thirteen years old and have passed the same examination). In order to qualify for half-time exemption all pupils had to be over twelve years of age and be 'beneficially employed', in addition to which he or she must have passed the HMI special examination in the fifth standard; have achieved more than 300 attendances in not more than two schools in each year for five years; and must be in possession of a labour certificate from the local authority.²³⁰

In the three week period ending 24 April 1903, the average number of pupils on the registers at Board and denominational schools in the city was 48,631 (the number in average attendance being 41,377), and the number in half-time attendance was 3,371.²³¹ The substantial decrease in half timers from 7,046 in October 1889²³² might be explained as a result of the gradual raising of the school leaving age, other legislative reforms, the increasing awareness of the value of education, and the preference of employers to recruit older school leavers. However, the most influential cause was a slump at the end of the

²³⁰ Fenn, *Development of Education*, p. 18.

²³¹ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 145.

²³² BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 24.

nineteenth century in the demand for locally produced worsted cloth, and when in 1903-04 trade saw sudden and dramatic improvement half-time employees were once again in demand, as the head master of Feversham Street Boys' School observed. 'The number of half-timers is largely increasing. We have now twice as many as last year, & nearly three times as many as two or three years ago.'²³³ In its final year of existence the Bradford School Board compiled annual statistical data on half timers and was perhaps dismayed to discover that the number of half-time pupils in the city had risen dramatically from 2,998 in 1902 to 4,327 in 1903.²³⁴ Expressed another way, this was an increase of 44.3 per cent.

The boom years in the Bradford textile industry, with only 'minor blemishes', lasted until 1874, but in the final quarter of the century it suffered from a deflated economy. According to one historian of the trade, 'The problems of wool supply, textile design, prohibitive tariffs and the cruel vagaries of fickle fashion, all served to threaten and debilitate the industry.'²³⁵ Bradford's staple manufacture, although thriving during the 1860s, was nevertheless in a state of flux and subject to ever changing market conditions. This unstable position is reflected in the log books since it impacted on school life. Before 1873, the only compulsion locally to attend school was that imposed on certain employers by the factory acts, and when trade fell off many parents removed their children from school not only because the obligation to send them had gone, but also to avoid payment of the weekly fee. It was generally the case that parents would send their children to school only where they could recognise the advantages in doing so. 'If one were going to be a farmer in adult life, then the best education one could have for this was on the farm, working from the earliest years, and certainly not in the elementary schools learning the three Rs, which were going to be of little significance in job-opportunity after school.'²³⁶ This analogy might also have been applied to families employed in the Bradford textile trade.

²³³ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 494, 10 June 1904.

²³⁴ BSB, *Report 1900-03*, p. 24.

²³⁵ G. Firth, 'The Bradford Trade in the Nineteenth Century.' In Wright and Jowitt (eds.), *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 7-36, p. 22.

²³⁶ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 386.

The Bradford log books from the beginning illustrate how the half-time system impacted on school life, one of the earliest references to half timers being made by the head master of St. Andrew's Boys' School, Listerhills. On 31 August 1863, he remarked about the 'constant change of boys from the mills',²³⁷ a sign of the often uneasy and tense relationship between the workplace and the school, both of which, as indicated earlier, were competing for the attention of the working scholar. The log books leave no room for doubt that the task facing the teacher was a difficult one. 'It appears almost impossible to teach the half-timers anything besides the very rudiments of an education', complained the head master of the Eastbrook Wesleyan School on 5 September 1865. 'In seven weeks there has been admitted about 80 half-timers, and about the same no. have left.'²³⁸ This school was also located near the town centre at the bottom of Leeds Road in an area where there was a large concentration of textile mills. By 14 May 1866, the number of half-time pupils had increased to 156, and still 'about ten half-timers are admitted every week, & about the same no. leave.'²³⁹ The head master experienced opposition in his determination to comply with the legislation. 'Find great difficulty in getting the Mill scholars to make up their time. In endeavouring to enforce this part of the Factory Act, I have frequently to encounter the abuse and scurrility of some of their parents.'²⁴⁰

The Factory Acts (Extension) Act 1867 (or the Factory and Workshop Act as it was more commonly known), which extended existing legislation to all other factories where more than 50 people were employed, prevented the employment of children under the age of eight; restricted to half-time working those aged eight to thirteen; and required that child employees must attend school for ten hours a week. 'I have admitted this week several scholars as half-timers under the new 'Workshop Regulation Act.' Two are employed at a Saw Mill & three at a Rope Making Establishment.'²⁴¹ Evidence of attendance was a weekly certificate given under the hand of the head teacher, on payment of a

²³⁷ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 6.

²³⁸ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 81.

²³⁹ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 109.

²⁴⁰ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 133, 6 March 1867.

²⁴¹ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p.188, 15 December 1868.

sum 'not exceeding 2d', deducted by the employer from the pupil-employee's wage. This most recent legislation probably more than any other afforded greater opportunity for non-compliance with the law since, as Armytage has pointed out, the administration of the Workshops' Regulation Act came not under the jurisdiction of factory inspectors, but under local authorities which 'were not forced to act.'²⁴²

The requirement of parents, schools, and employers to observe the law is also apparent from the inception of the school log book in 1863, and is illustrative of the dependency and effect that one had upon the other. On 23 March 1863, the head mistress of St. James's Girls' School wrote, 'Admitted the little girl I dismissed the previous week on her mother's intercession & the child's promise for better behaviour in future. – Parents very poor & the child could not obtain work unless allowed to come to school.'²⁴³ The inference is that the girl had been refused the prospect of a job since she was unable to produce to the employer a certificate under the hand of the head mistress certifying that she had attended formal instruction for a requisite number of hours.²⁴⁴ Others were less concerned. 'Some boys from Messrs. Mitchell and Shepherd's away as the engine had broken down. Mill-boys do not appear to consider it their duty to be at school when there is no work at the mill; the act does not force them, and they will have no more schooling than the act provides for.'²⁴⁵ This school master, it appears, had no faith in the role of the factory inspectorate.

The head mistress of St. James's Girls' School observed on 27 November 1866 that '15 girls left school, there being no work at the mill for them.' Only a few weeks later, on 28 January 1867, she was able to record that 'numbers much better than in preceding week owing to the increase of trade', but on 8 March 1867 the average attendance was 'much less than last week on account of the badness of trade.'²⁴⁶ The adjoining boys' department suffered the same fate, the head master noting on 9 May 1864, 'Half-timers now in much greater

²⁴² Armytage, *English Education*, p. 138.

²⁴³ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 8.

²⁴⁴ For a comprehensive discussion about nineteenth century factory legislation as it affected children see Robson, *Children Engaged in Industry*.

²⁴⁵ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 62-3, 14 April 1864.

²⁴⁶ St. James's Girls' School log book, pp. 117, 122 and 125.

proportion to the day boys than formerly, owing to the plentifulness of work.²⁴⁷ On 25 January 1867 he bemoaned the loss of half timers through 'depression of trade', and on 12 February 1867 he further complained that 'the slackness of work causes a diminution of half-timers.'²⁴⁸ The uncertainty of regular paid employment and its influence on half-time attendance was routinely felt at St. James's Boys' School, the head master commenting on 28 October 1870, 'A great number of boys have gone full time lately, and the slackness of trade causes many to have to leave the mills and consequently the school.'²⁴⁹ Yet even when the mills were busy the transient nature of the half timer was much in evidence. 'I find that 199 have been admitted since March 1st, and that only 121 are still in the school. As work is plentiful and wages good, half-timers are always on the look-out for better wages, and thus they change from school to school much more than is desirable.'²⁵⁰

It was the case also that the mill owner or mill manager could exert considerable influence in the selection of a child's school. At the end of March 1863, Messrs Dixon & Co. withdrew their half timers from St. James's Boys' School 'for some unassigned reason', while a change of masters at Leeming Mill resulted in the departure of fifteen boys.²⁵¹ The head master noted on 22 March 1870 that he 'received two women asking if their boys (who have changed mills) might be allowed to come to this school again. Informed them that I had no control but that they might see the managers of the respective mills.'²⁵² For those pupils attending Feversham Street School who went half-time at nearby Anderton's mill 'this necessitates these children leaving this school altogether as Anderton's have a school of their own to which their half-timers must go.'²⁵³ But, of course, there were other influences – some close to

²⁴⁷ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 67.

²⁴⁸ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 169 and 170.

²⁴⁹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 276.

²⁵⁰ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 297, 16 August 1871.

²⁵¹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 14-15, 30 March 1863.

²⁵² St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 252-3, 22 February 1870.

²⁵³ Feversham Street Mixed School log book, p. 266, 29 March 1889. This was a reference to Eastbrook Wesleyan (British) School which, for several years, had met in a room on the mill premises of Swithin Anderton and Company adjoining Feversham Street, it having originated in the Sunday school premises attached to Eastbrook Hall in Chapel Street. It may have been the only factory school in Bradford in 1889.

home such as the intervention of fellow teachers interested in the half timer. The head of Feversham Street School reported the loss on 10 March 1893 of a number of Garnett's mill half timers, the reason being, as he sarcastically put it, 'thanks (?) to the master of Barkerend H. T. school.'²⁵⁴ During its term in office the fourth School Board opened separate half-time departments in four of its existing schools reporting that, 'This arrangement enables the other departments in the same schools to be reserved for full-day scholars only. Both classes of children are benefited by this separation.' Barkerend half-time school had places for 217 scholars, but there were 316 on the registers on 10 November 1882.²⁵⁵ This may be explained by the fact that some attended the morning session while others assembled during the afternoon meeting.

Table 10. Half-time employment of children in Bradford, February 1893.

Employed in -	Number of Half-Time Scholars.				
	From 10 to 11yrs. of age.	From 11 to 12yrs. of age.	From 12 to 13yrs. of age.	From 13 to 14 yrs. of age.	Total
A. *Factories	490	1333	1840	381	4044
B. *Workshops	11	49	91	19	170
C. Other Employments	129	356	489	130	1104
Total	630	1738	2420	530	5318

*N.B. Factories are distinguished from Workshops by the use of Steam, Water, or other Mechanical Power, in aid of the manufacturing process.

Source: BSB, *Report 1891-94*, p. 47.

The School Board expressed itself as still unhappy with the 'very large' number of half-time scholars when comparing itself with Manchester, Huddersfield, and Leeds, which, in February 1893, had 725, 358, and 259 half timers respectively. However, it felt a little reassured to see that there was 'a tendency on the part of

²⁵⁴ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, pp. 334-5.

²⁵⁵ BSB, *Report 1879-82*, pp. 32 and 15.

employers to engage some of the full-time surplus adult labour in place of half-time child labour.²⁵⁶

Teachers reluctantly accepted that the half-time pupil was an inherent feature in the make-up of Bradford's elementary schools as Philip Baxendale, a local head master, pointed out when giving evidence to the Cross Commission.²⁵⁷

Although Baxendale condemned the half-time system, when asked whether it ought to be abolished he replied, 'I think that it is impossible; the little money that these children earn means to some parents the rent or even the necessities of life; it may mean coals to some families.'²⁵⁸ His local colleague John Sowden, of St. James's Boys' School, remarked, 'I put on record my firm belief that during the first six months of his employment at the mill the average boy's power to do good work in school is very seriously diminished.'²⁵⁹ John Stansfield, at Feversham Street Boys' School, expressed the despair felt by his profession. 'We are admitting boys quickly now & boys are leaving (especially "full time") just as fast. I do not think there is a school in the town where this constant changing is so rapid. It is very discouraging to the teachers whose classes can scarcely be said to be [the] same classes after two or three months have elapsed.'²⁶⁰ A year later Stansfield recorded the 'shocked' reaction of a visiting member of the London School Board when told about the number of half timers in his school.²⁶¹

The arrival in Bradford in November 1893 of Margaret McMillan, and her subsequent election to the Bradford School Board as the only Socialist member, further highlighted the plight of the half timer and the state generally of Bradford's working-class children. During her time on the Board (1894-1902), McMillan was instrumental in promoting school medical inspections; extending feeding provision for necessitous scholars; and pioneering school baths, and

²⁵⁶ BSB, *Report 1891-94*, p. 47.

²⁵⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts*. The report was published in 1888, and commonly referred to as The Cross Report after its chairman, Lord Cross.

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Elliott, 'Bradford School Board and Department of Education.' p. 22. Cross Report, pp. 1887, xxix, q. 14,070.

²⁵⁹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, pp. 47-8, 13 March 1890.

²⁶⁰ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 305, 11 September 1891.

²⁶¹ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 325, 14 October 1892.

she wrote a number of papers about the plight of the half timer which highlighted their physical condition.²⁶² Her biography by Mansbridge was published in 1932, the year after her death.²⁶³ Two much later detailed examinations of her life are those by Bradburn,²⁶⁴ and by Steedman.²⁶⁵

McMillan found that conditions among the younger workers were 'worse than anything described or painted the half-timers slept, exhausted at their desks, and still from streets and alleys, children attended school in every stage and state of physical misery.'²⁶⁶ Towards the end of the nineteenth century attitudes at large concerning the subject of child labour had witnessed a dramatic shift from the expectation that a child should contribute to the family income to one which broadly condemned the idea. Although determined on the abolition of the half-time system, McMillan realised that this was a political and economic impossibility in Bradford. Ittmann has suggested that women's social activism fitted uncomfortably into the Independent Labour Party's emphasis on the male wage earner, and while 'children and education represented the areas open to them they remained constrained by larger political realities. While Margaret McMillan sat on the Bradford School Board, she was surrounded by a majority of officials drawn from the ranks of the local Liberal and Conservative establishment.'²⁶⁷ Delegates from textile centres argued at ILP conferences in 1895 and 1897 in support of the half-time employment system as an economic necessity for working-class families. Locally McMillan condemned parents who were prepared to allow their children to work and, in April 1895, she was part of a deputation to the Home Secretary which called for an end to half-time schooling and working, arguing that popular feeling on the subject in Bradford

²⁶² M. McMillan, 'Child Labour and the Half Time System.' *Clarion* Pamphlet No. 15, Clarion Newspaper Company, (1896); 'The Half-Time System', *Clarion*, (12 September 1896); 'The Half-Time System: Part II', *Clarion*, (19 September 1896).

²⁶³ A. Mansbridge, *Margaret McMillan. Prophet and Pioneer. Her Life and Work* (London: Dent, 1932).

²⁶⁴ E. Bradburn, *Margaret McMillan. Portrait of a Pioneer* (London: Routledge, 1989).

²⁶⁵ C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain. Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931* (London: Virago Press, 1990).

²⁶⁶ Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 108. Quoted from M. McMillan, *Life of Rachel McMillan* (London: Dent, 1927), pp. 87-8.

²⁶⁷ Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, p. 174.

had changed.²⁶⁸ Her argument seems hardly convincing when, by the Board's own measure (quoted earlier), more than four thousand children were employed as half timers in 1903, the year after she left the city.

The half-time system in Bradford continued well into the twentieth century as the Elementary Education Special Sub-Committee's report of 1910 shows. The sub-committee recorded that in the preceding twelve months it had granted 3,043 certificates to children working in accordance with the Factory and Workshop Act, and that a further 185 had been granted in fulfilment of other employment criteria. In addition, permission for occasional or temporary exemption had been given in 158 cases.²⁶⁹

The Education Act of 1918, which made compulsory the full-time attendance at school of all children aged from five to fourteen, finally brought to an end the tradition of half-time employment which had been a feature of Bradford life for longer than any of its citizens could recall. The irony of the half-time system, as Pressley has asserted, is that of the half timer being 'the first group of children to receive an education by compulsion and the last to escape the full time system.'²⁷⁰

5.3 Poverty.

The extent to which poverty impacted on the attendance of Bradford's school children in the latter part of the nineteenth century has not been investigated. Certainly there was a consensus that the malnourished child was at a disadvantage in the classroom. Margaret McMillan asserted that 'where the State compels a hungry child to learn, it is doing a thing, which is, on moral grounds, indefensible.'²⁷¹

Chapter 1 of this study drew attention to the condition and misery of working-class life in Victorian Bradford. Many contemporary and later studies document

²⁶⁸ Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 109.

²⁶⁹ City of Bradford Education Committee. *Report for the Year 1st April, 1909 – 31st March, 1910*, p. 48.

²⁷⁰ Pressley, 'Aspects of the Half-Time System', p. 3.

²⁷¹ M. McMillan, 'The Cost of Mental Effort.' *Ethical World*, 21 January 1900. Quoted in Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 110.

the destitution and deprivation endured by a large portion of the town's population. A vivid and concise picture of the state of the underprivileged in Bradford during the first thirty or so years of the Victorian period, from the perspective of poor law provision, is painted by Ashworth in his essay, 'The Treatment of Poverty in Bradford 1837-1871.'²⁷² The Bradford Improvement Act of 1850 sought to improve the conditions in which the majority of the town's population lived. It has been estimated that by the late 1850s almost three-quarters of Bradford's houses had been erected in the simple and cost-effective manner known as back-to-back – a style of building which was finally banned in 1873, and it wasn't until the 1870s that the infamous cellar dwellings were altogether outlawed.²⁷³

It was against this background that the vast majority of Bradford's children attended elementary school, and the log books bear testimony to the poverty that was much in evidence in the classroom. In 1897, as the nation prepared to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in the certain knowledge that Britain was the leading world power, one local head teacher observed that many children stayed away from school after a bout of heavy snow, 'some of them having no boots, and others scarcely any food.'²⁷⁴ His predecessor was familiar with the cry 'no shoes' during inclement weather as one of the reasons for absence, and he no doubt had some sympathy with the brothers Whitaker who attended alternatively due to the fact that they had to share a jacket.²⁷⁵ Another local teacher reported similar reasons for absence. 'Many of our poorer boys having boots & shoes that will not turn water always stay away during very wet days.'²⁷⁶ Exceptionally bad weather prevented the attendance of children at Feversham Street Boys' School who possessed neither shoes nor clogs.²⁷⁷ It was a similar picture at St. James's Boys' School. 'A miserable day. Two-thirds of the children have leaky shoes. They had to plod through deep melting

²⁷² D. Ashworth, 'The Treatment of Poverty in Bradford 1837 to 1871.' In Wright and Jowitt, (eds), *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 81-99.

²⁷³ A. Hall, *The Story of Bradford* (Stroud: The History Press, 2013), p. 82.

²⁷⁴ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 174, 5 February 1897.

²⁷⁵ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, pp. 42 and 30, 26 November 1889 and 11 January 1889.

²⁷⁶ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 326, 28 October 1892.

²⁷⁷ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 367, 8 February 1895.

snow.²⁷⁸ Feversham Street Boys' School was grateful to receive assistance in 1899 from one of Bradford's higher grade schools located in Manningham, an affluent part of the city. 'The teachers & scholars of Belle Vue Schools have collected quite a cart-ful of cast-off clothing & given them to us for the poor children of this school. I have supplied between 30 & 40 boys with various articles of attire'²⁷⁹ At the close of 1900, the head master reported that 'I have had sent to me a number of articles – boots & stockings principally – to give to poorly clad & shod boys.' He observed that marching in school had become much noisier resulting from 'a large increase in the number of boys wearing clogs.'²⁸⁰ Two years earlier, thirteen shillings was given by one of the managers at St. James's School 'to purchase clogs for poor children.'²⁸¹

There were 463 licensed public houses and beerhouses in Bradford in 1890,²⁸² and it is perhaps surprising that there are so few references in school log books to the indirect effect on school attendance caused by the ready availability and the relatively cheap price of alcohol. In 1891, a head master commented that the weekly fee of one penny was not forthcoming from a pupil who pleaded, "Father drank all the money, and mother hasn't a penny."²⁸³ However, in 1893, the same head remarked that 'The County Council might fittingly apply a fair part of the 'Whiskey Money' to the relief of poor children, for (as a rule) their misery is caused by drink.'²⁸⁴ He was referring to the substantial grants lately made available by increasing taxes on beer and spirits to permit newly created county and borough councils to aid in the provision of technical education.

Bradford may possibly have been the first place in the country to introduce formally the concept of the feeding of school children when, in 1892, the School Board gave permission to the locally established Cinderella Club charitable organisation to use the cellars of certain schools 'for the purpose of preparing

²⁷⁸ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 94, 1 March 1893.

²⁷⁹ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 444, 3 November 1899.

²⁸⁰ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 457, 14 December 1900.

²⁸¹ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 196, 29 November 1898.

²⁸² P. Jennings, *The Public House in Bradford, 1770-1970* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), p. 162.

²⁸³ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 73, 9 October 1891.

²⁸⁴ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 94, 1 March 1893.

and serving dinners to poor children during the winter months.²⁸⁵ The Bradford born author J. B. Priestley attributed the innovation to having taken place much later at Green Lane Council School where his father Jonathan Priestley was head master.²⁸⁶ In fact, the earliest documented record of the provision of school meals took place in 1886 at Wapping Road Mixed and Infant Schools following the visit of HM Inspector of Schools who noted in his report, 'some of the children are insufficiently fed and belong to a very poor class.' This prompted a visit by two members of the School Board who gave ten shillings to the head teachers to enable the purchase of dinners for certain scholars who were suffering from 'want of food'. At the beginning of March the head of the mixed department noted that he had provided dinners for 30 children, observing that 'there is great distress amongst the people.' Thereafter the Cinderella Club continued to afford further assistance.²⁸⁷ The School Board appears to have made no formal acknowledgement of permitting school meals during the early years. It would not have been wise to do so since it had no legal right to allow them. There was no official sanction from the Education Department, and it may have feared the indignation of the ratepayers who no doubt felt that the responsibility rested with parents, charities, or the Board of Guardians. On 25 November 1898, a 'Free Tea', including 'hams', was provided, at a cost of £3, for 387 children attending the St. James's National School, and, shortly afterwards, it was stated that 'the children for the past few days have had free soup supplied at the Vicarage for those of the poorest class.'²⁸⁸

Poverty among Bradford's school children persisted into the twentieth century. A retired teacher, writing seventy years after her appointment to the staff of

²⁸⁵ Quoted in *Education in Bradford*, p. 126. There is no mention of this in the Board's Triennial Report for 1891-94.

²⁸⁶ In the preface to F. Brockway's book, *Socialism Over Sixty Years. (The Life of Jowett of Bradford 1864-1944)* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), Priestley states, 'It was at my father's school that the first children in the country received school meals.' Jonathan Priestley was head master at Green Lane Council School when the Education Committee established there in 1907 the first central cooking depot in the country for the preparation and distribution of school meals.

²⁸⁷ J. Jackson, *Wapping School, Bradford, 1877-2000* (Unpublished typescript).

²⁸⁸ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 196, 25 and 29 November 1898.

Drummond Road Infants' Board School, recalled vividly the state of some of her young charges. 'There were dirty heads, lice dropping on to desks, children with warts on hands, sometimes bleeding ringworms on heads, running noses (no handkerchiefs) and sore mouths.' She remembered also the thirteen year old half timers in the upper department of the same school who were 'too tired and underfed to learn and fell asleep at their desks after six hours in the mill.'²⁸⁹ Another teacher in the city recalled that throughout the Edwardian period children came to school wearing clogs and it was not uncommon for some to arrive barefoot, even in winter.²⁹⁰

5.4 Parental Attitudes.

Addressing the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Manchester in 1866, J. A. Bremner, a local merchant and a vociferous proponent of universal education, delivered a scathing attack on parents who he cited as the main obstacle to school attendance. Apathy on the part of parents was the main theme of his lecture. In particular he was critical of mothers and fathers who were quite able yet refused to pay school fees; and those who accepted charitable aid and were neglectful in sending their sons and daughters to school. He attributed this indifference to parents undervaluing the worth of education due to their own woefully uneducated state.²⁹¹ However, Bremner recognised also that the law was deficient in requiring 'vicious or selfish parents to attend to the moral or educational wants of their children'; that some families were so poverty stricken that they were simply unable to afford decent clothing for their offspring; and that poorly shod children had an aversion to mixing with those who were better placed. He went as far as blaming some teachers who were disinclined to enrol the poorest children because they were considered to lower the tone of the school. The Bradford school log books certainly reflect many of Bremner's views about parental indifference and the influence of poverty, but occasionally they show also that some parents appreciated the

²⁸⁹ E. Makinson, 'Teaching in Bradford Seventy Years Ago.' In *Forster Bulletin*, May 1971, pp. 13-20, p. 15.

²⁹⁰ Hall, *Story of Bradford*, p. 146. The author refers to the reminiscences of Jack Milner who taught at Usher Street and Feversham Street Schools.

²⁹¹ Quoted in Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 15.

value of education, and made efforts to overcome the barriers that stood in their way.

Taking a sympathetic view towards parents, who understood the value of reading, writing, and arithmetic but for whom the want of time was an important consideration, Bremner's observation is one which Hurt finds harsh. 'For the majority of working-class parents and children time did not permit. Parents could not afford to take other than a restricted view of the formal education they deemed necessary for their children.' However, Hurt concurs that 'in addition most [parents] were not culturally equipped to do so.'²⁹² Ellis acknowledges that there were 'a minority of parents [who] were aware of the potential value of education, and for this reason made considerable sacrifice so that their children might benefit from attendance at school.'²⁹³

Apathy on the part of parents has been shown by many educational historians to be the chief cause of absence. Elkington asserts that it was 'the greatest of all barriers to school attendance in the 1860's.'²⁹⁴ Ellis, commenting on the same period, states that 'the most common cause of educational neglect was agreed to be due to apathy on the part of parents.'²⁹⁵ Writing about the generous provision of voluntary schools in Nottingham, Wardle observes that although the places were there parents could not be induced to send their children to them. This, he remarks, 'was perhaps the most pressing problem bequeathed by the voluntary system to the School Board.'²⁹⁶

From 1870, as has been noted, the new school boards had the power to impose bye-laws enforcing compulsory attendance, and the capacity to prosecute parents who failed to ensure that their children habitually attended school. But the duties and actions of these new authorities were not those which were contrived to endear them to parents who, with very few exceptions, traditionally had full control over their children's upbringing. In addition, there were a number of deep-seated reasons universally attributable to parents for poor attendance

²⁹² Hurt, *Elementary Schooling*, pp. 30-1.

²⁹³ Ellis, 'Influences', pp. 313-26.

²⁹⁴ Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 15.

²⁹⁵ Ellis, 'Influences', p. 317.

²⁹⁶ Wardle, *Education and Society*, p. 53.

in the middle of the nineteenth century at a time when compulsory attendance was only for the minority of children who came within the scope of the Factory acts. Pallister states that 'by far the most significant underlying determinant was the prevailing attitude of parents towards what was given in schools at that time in the name of education, in comparison with what could be gained by keeping the child away from school.'²⁹⁷ This view is supported both by Elkington²⁹⁸ and Ellis.²⁹⁹

Even among those parents who did perceive education to be of some value there were elements who 'failed often to appreciate the importance of regular attendance towards the securing of adequate learning, and moreover they lacked the steadfastness and self-denial to enforce it.'³⁰⁰

Many parents survived on the brink of poverty and when it came to a simple choice between whether their children should receive tuition and whether they should work to help support the family, almost inevitably the latter course was pursued. As Elkington has observed, 'In an age before compulsory schooling, attendance depended on the co-operation of the parents, and, for many, the wages which a child could earn in industry outweighed the attraction of elementary schooling.'³⁰¹

The Bradford school log books present views in general about head teachers' interpretation of parental attitudes towards elementary school attendance. The thoughts, concerns, and opinions of parents are seldom recorded. Rarely is there evidence to show expression of understanding, compassion, or empathy towards working class parents for whom the education of their children hitherto had been limited to that furnished by Sunday schools, and for whom day school attendance had been, for the most part, an option and not a requirement.

The most frequently cited causes of absence in Bradford attributable to parental influence included the requirement for children to assist at home with household duties; the inability to pay fees; disputes between teachers and parents

²⁹⁷ Pallister, 'Determinants', pp. 384-98.

²⁹⁸ Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 11.

²⁹⁹ Ellis, 'Influences', pp. 317-18.

³⁰⁰ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 395.

³⁰¹ Elkington, 'Problems of Attendance', p. 11.

involving the worth of lessons; the objection to corporal punishment; political influences; and general apathy. Although these reasons and excuses for absence were much in evidence before the introduction of local compulsion in the early 1870s, they would persist throughout the school board period only gradually diminishing as the nineteenth century drew to a close, and compulsory education and its place in society became firmly established in people's minds.

'The employment of young girls in child-minding or in cooking and cleaning contributed to poor attendance [and] the attendance of girls at school was consistently worse than that of boys', observed Kirby. 'In industrial districts, moreover, as living standards rose and more mothers entered the labour market, the burden upon girls tended to increase.'³⁰² The days immediately preceding Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide were those when mothers often sought the help of their daughters in particular to ensure that all was spic and span in the home in preparation for the religious holidays. In 1863, the head mistress of St. James's Girls' School noted that several of her pupils were absent 'owing to "cleaning down" for Whitsuntide.'³⁰³ However, the boys did not escape these annual rituals since many were discovered to be absent from St. Andrew's School during the following year 'helping to clean the houses for Whitsuntide.'³⁰⁴ It was also the case that parents would simply keep their children at home for no other reason than that of the approach of the religious and festive holidays.

The inability of some parents to pay the one, two, or three penny weekly fee was further recognised in 1876 when the Education act of that year empowered Boards of Guardians to pay school fees in cases of destitution. The relationship between the Bradford School Board and the Board of Guardians of the Bradford Poor Law Union with regard to school fees was always strained. The Guardians regularly refused to remit the fees of impoverished children in cases where they

³⁰² Kirby, *Child Labour*, p. 118. Kirby's quotations alluded to A. Davin, *Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 643-4 and p. 647.

³⁰³ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 11, 18 May 1863.

³⁰⁴ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 34, 9 May 1864.

were legally obliged to do so. Tensions occasionally flared such as in August 1882 when the petulant Guardians, aware that the School Board also had the power to remit fees, were found to be acting in contravention of Statute and the instructions of the Local Government Board by ordering that children whose fees they paid must attend non-Board schools. They were obliged to concede defeat in the matter.³⁰⁵ It happened that the Clerk to the Guardians, John Darlington, was also the Superintendent Registrar. On more than one occasion he was found to be acting in a discriminatory manner towards people seeking to obtain 'age exemption' birth certificates by charging them higher fees for documents on demand, and by making them wait for an unreasonable amount of time.³⁰⁶

In April 1864 'the pence' was increased at St. Andrew's Boys' National School, the consequence being that the school account suffered a significant decrease in income of around 21 per cent.³⁰⁷ When the number on roll continued to fall the head master went to see the parents of boys who had left and discovered that they had been removed to another school. 'They have no reason for taking them with the exception that they can go for less price.'³⁰⁸ However, he did not hold the parents entirely to blame. 'The Independents making great exertions to draw our day boys from us.'³⁰⁹ A week later he interviewed one of the parents over whom influence had been exerted. 'Went and saw Mrs Hirst; the only reason for taking her son away was that the Indept. Master had said we had taken in the worst set of boys in the neighbourhood.'³¹⁰ The nearby Listerhills Independent Chapel was almost certainly the one poaching the St. Andrew's pupils since it was 'compelling their Sunday Scholars to go to day School.'³¹¹

It appears that the political interests of some working-class parents also had a bearing on their children's presence in the classroom, even at the level of very

³⁰⁵ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 2, pp. 382 and 387, 22 August 1882 and 19 September 1882.

³⁰⁶ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 2, p. 599, 3 March 1885, and vol. 3, p. 382, 26 August 1890.

³⁰⁷ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 33, 25 April 1864.

³⁰⁸ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 39, 3 August 1864.

³⁰⁹ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 45, 11 October 1864.

³¹⁰ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 46, 18 October 1864.

³¹¹ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 202, 16 January 1871.

young scholars. The attendance at the White Abbey Wesleyan Infants' School was found to be low on one particular day in 1866 'in consequence of a holiday having been given by the employers to their hands because of the Reform Demonstration held at Leeds.'³¹² The National Society was affiliated to the Anglican Tory party and a few parents considered it was a step too far when one of its candidates gained local success. ' I have lost 2 or 3 famous boys out of 1st Class from political feeling of parents arising out of the late Parliamentary Election for the Northern Divn of West Riding resulting in the return of a Conservative.'³¹³ Pupils were not above absenting themselves from school at election time. As Roberts has observed, literacy levels were low and 'for many people sight and sound remained the most important forms of communication.'³¹⁴ Spurred on by the proliferation of political cartoons, elections assumed a carnival atmosphere with fairs and bands providing exciting distractions for children. One of the first by-elections in the country after the Reform Act of 1867 was held in Bradford. 'Hardly 30 boys present it being election day. M. W. Thompson, Esq. returned.'³¹⁵

The dismissal of a child for insubordination caused his mother to visit school since 'she seems to consider her boy a paragon and innocent of offence. As she became insolent and personal the interview came to an abrupt ending.'³¹⁶ This is typical of many instances of parents demonstrably affronted at the admonition of their children by teachers and of making their feelings known: 'The mother of the child dismissed came to school, was very insolent – would not believe her child had done wrong.'³¹⁷; 'One of the children's mothers came and caused a great disturbance in the school because her daughter was not allowed to have lessons whilst other children were having needlework She would not be appeased & began to be very violent when I had to send for

³¹² White Abbey Wesleyan Infants' School log book, p. 25, 8 October 1866.

³¹³ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 225, 8 March 1872.

³¹⁴ M. Roberts, 'Election Cartoons and Political Communication in Victorian England.' *Cultural & Social History*, vol. 10, issue 3, (September 2013), pp. 369-95, p. 370.

³¹⁵ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 124, 15 October 1867. Matthew William Thompson was destined to become the first chairman of the Bradford School Board in 1870.

³¹⁶ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 461, 29 June 1883.

³¹⁷ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 7, 18 March 1863.

someone to send her away.³¹⁸; ‘M. Rutherford’s mother came & abused the teachers uttering the most dreadful oaths & threats because her child was kept in school for obstinacy & disobedience.’³¹⁹; ‘Sent three children home who had ringworm; their father was offended at it and sent them to the Model School’³²⁰; ‘Binns’ father came in a great rage because I caned his son. Why will parents be so foolish as to encourage their children?’³²¹ When Mrs Lownds appeared and threatened to remove her son because he had not left school at the end of the morning session she was requested to leave and informed that her son’s name would be removed from the registers. ‘This virago will trouble the St. James’s Teachers no more.’³²² A curious reason for the repeated failure of the children of Mr and Mrs Lane to appear in school was that ‘The mother is a Romanist & the father a Protestant and the feminine portion of the house is too strong for the father who only admits to having received one post card out of many that have been sent to him respecting the evil habits &c of his children.’³²³

Conversely, some parents took a keen interest in their children’s education and were eager to encourage regular attendance and instruction, and were even prepared to take issue when they felt that standards of teaching fell short of that which was expected: ‘Thomas Scott’s father called to complain of the careless examination of his son’s exercise-book. Complaint well-founded teacher reprimanded.’³²⁴; ‘A mother came to show how badly her little girl’s work had been done.’ The head teacher discovered ‘neglect’ on the part of a first year pupil teacher.³²⁵; ‘Henry Broadbent’s father called during the afternoon to make enquiries and remark as to his son’s progress.’³²⁶; ‘Farrar Smith’s father complained that his son was not progressing satisfactorily.’³²⁷; ‘A great many

³¹⁸ St. James’s Girls’ School log book, pp. 113-14, 24 October 1866.

³¹⁹ Parish Church Girls’ School log book, p. 67, 28 November 1866.

³²⁰ St. James’s Infants’ School log book, p. 2, 19 April 1869.

³²¹ St. Andrew’s Boys’ School log book, p. 57, 24 February 1865.

³²² St. James’s Boys’ School log book, vol. 1, pp. 409, 27 May 1878.

³²³ St. James’s Boys’ School log book, vol. 2, p. 58, 12 December 1890.

³²⁴ St. James’s Boys’ School log book, vol. 1, p. 7, 11 February 1863.

³²⁵ St. James’s Girls’ School log book, p. 16, 25 August 1863.

³²⁶ St. James’s Boys’ School log book, vol. 1, p. 8, 18 February 1863.

³²⁷ St. James’s Boys’ School log book, vol. 1, p. 47, 10 December 1863.

parents came and complained that their children had not properly been attended to for several months past³²⁸

In other areas parents showed interest or awareness in school affairs: 'Have been much annoyed by continual hindrances to school work by the repeated visits of parents looking after so-called truant children.'³²⁹; 'Received a "Phrenological Chart" from the mother of John Rhodes, a boy in the last class. She seemed to attach great importance to it so has sent it for my inspection.'³³⁰; 'Mrs Myers, Caledonia Arms, Caledonia St, called & announced her intention of withdrawing her boys because she "did not like them to intermix with half timers" who "use such bad words." Advised her to use her own judgment.'³³¹; 'Received a Roman Catholic parent – a curiosity – he does not believe in denominational education. He called to see how his boy progressed, and asked that he might be allowed to hear the Scripture lesson which was being given.'³³²; 'Received a note from two of the children's parents objecting to their learning Catechism.'³³³; 'Signed a certificate stating that I had refused to re-admit John Thomas Dobson into the school, on account of his attendance and conduct being so bad. His poor mother is taking steps to get him into a Reformatory.'³³⁴; And head master Thomas Winsor must have reflected on the tensions in the relationship between his profession and parents when he recorded in his log book, 'Mrs Midgley says I am not strict enough; others say I am too strict.'³³⁵

In June 1874, as the Bradford School Board prepared to open several purpose-built schools, the School Attendance Committee focused attention on five regional catchment areas to which a sixth was added in October 1875. Also in October 1875, the post of superintendent attendance officer was created at a salary of £95, a remuneration in excess of that paid to many of the Board's head teachers, and a further indication of its determination to tackle widespread and persistent non-compliance with bye-laws. In November 1879, the

³²⁸ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 74, 17 July 1865.

³²⁹ Feversham Street Mixed School log book, p. 85, 23 November 1887.

³³⁰ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 272, 16 September 1870.

³³¹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 349, 6 July 1874.

³³² St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 254, 9 March 1870.

³³³ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 209, 7 March 1870.

³³⁴ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 309, 15 April 1872.

³³⁵ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 47, 19 October 1864.

committee defended its actions in pursuing wanton cases of disregard for the regulations stating that, 'It has always been the desire of this Committee to allow every opportunity to negligent parents of attending and offering any excuse they might consider necessary in extenuation of their conduct.'³³⁶

The following table illustrates the nature and extent of the School Attendance Committee's involvement with parents in the three year period to November 1879. The Board deferred to the magistrates' court as a last resort 'where all kindly remonstrances have appeared to have been utterly disregarded.'³³⁷

Table 11. Summary of cases investigated and results during the years 1877-79.

	1877	1878	1879	Total
Warned	744	860	1342	2946
Half-time allowed to children not working under the Factory and Workshop, or Mines Act	151	248	266	665
Total exemption from School	6	3	12	21
Permission of Absence (Occasional or temporary)	47	38	34	119
Summonses authorised	487	678	417	1582
Fees remitted	338	751	1672	2761
Fees refused	38	58	140	236
Cases reported to the Factory Inspector	37	73	22	132
Cases reported to Employers	18	141	118	277
Total	1866	2850	4023	8739

Source: BSB, *Report 1879-82*, p. 11.

As the following table shows the magistrates found overwhelmingly in favour of the Board and meted out appropriate penalties on both parents and children.

³³⁶ BSB, *Report 1879-82*, p. 11.

³³⁷ BSB, *Report 1879-82*, p. 11.

Table 12. Cases brought before the magistrates and consequent action during the years 1877-79.

	1877	1878	1879	Total
Fined, £2..0..0	1	-	-	1
1..10..0	1	-	-	1
1..5..0	1	-	-	1
1..0..0	1	1	-	2
0.15..0	5	4	4	13
0.10..0	39	61	28	128
0..7..6	1	4	2	7
0..5..0	141	190	127	458
0..2..6	177	262	182	621
Dismissed	6	2	3	11
Withdrawn	31	54	27	112
Sent to 'Southampton' Training Ship	11	5	7	23
Sent to Broomfields Industrial School	1	4	7	12
Sent to Shibden Industrial School	1	6	-	7
Sent to Kirk Edge Industrial School (near Sheffield)	-	1	-	1
Sent to Boys' Refuge Industrial School, Liverpool	-	-	1	1
Sent to Orphanage Industrial School, Liverpool	1	-	-	1
Sent to Workhouse	12	4	1	17
Flogged	1	3	-	4
Summons not served	1	-	-	1
Warrants issued	1	-	-	1
Adjourned	-	-	9	9
Total	433	601	398	1432

Source: BSB, *Report 1879-82*, p. 12.

The charge that many parents were not sufficiently interested in their children's education, through their persistent failure to see that their offspring attended school in accordance with local bye-laws, was one which found frequent complaint among head teachers. In 1880, at the higher grade school in Feversham Street, Bradford, where the weekly fee was 9d, the parents of absentee boys were contacted about their sons' repeated non-appearance in school. 'We have had much irregularity this week, and altho I have had every boy visited yet the number of absences is very great. I have written during the

week upwards of forty notes to parents about absences.³³⁸ The head master was clear about where the blame lay. When 93 per cent average attendance was achieved on one occasion in 1887 he remarked that 'Any sort of excuse seems good enough with some parents.'³³⁹ In fact, this attainment was very good when compared with an average of 75.19 per cent for all schools in Bradford during that year.³⁴⁰ The head master was dissatisfied perhaps because his school was patronised by the children of 'better off' parents whom he might have expected to act in a more responsible fashion. At the Eastbrook Wesleyan School 'The prominent & only thought the parents have is how soon they can [be] got to work & earning something.'³⁴¹ The head mistress of Usher Street Girls' School, complained often during her short tenure in office in the year 1885 about poor attendance and she too was quite certain about whom to hold accountable. 'The parents seem not to value education and make no effort to send their children regularly.'³⁴² At St. James's Boys' School the head master admitted 'a big lad above 11 years of age, unable to say his letters. His mother said his father had forced him to work, and utterly neglected his education.'³⁴³

For some parents irregular attendance was evidently a direct consequence of their own employment needs, as in the case of Mr Pellett who stated quite frankly to his 'insubordinate' boy's head master 'that he would keep his son at work with him in summer, & send him to school in winter.'³⁴⁴ The very nature of some parents' work commitments made prolonged attendance at any school difficult. 'I have admitted ten boys this week, six of whom are hawkers' children, travelling from place to place & consequently backward.'³⁴⁵

³³⁸ Feversham Street Higher Grade Boys' School log book, p. 94, 17 December 1880.

³³⁹ Feversham Street Higher Grade Boys' School log book, p. 244, 14 October 1887.

³⁴⁰ BSB, *Report 1891-94*, p. 55.

³⁴¹ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 362, 28 January 1878.

³⁴² J. Jackson, and J. Honey, *Usher Street School, Bradford, 1879-1979* (Privately published, 1979), p. 16.

³⁴³ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 77, 16 August 1864.

³⁴⁴ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 205-6, 6 May 1868.

³⁴⁵ Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 411, 7 May 1897.

5.5 Illnesses and Weather.

‘Boys stay away during bad weather for fear of getting cold & they seem to stay away in fine weather for fear of getting well.’³⁴⁶

This sarcastic yet somewhat confusing observation by a Bradford head teacher was very likely meant as an expression of his dismay at a familiar excuse for low numbers - illness and weather working in tandem to facilitate habitual absence from school. Nationally these were the two most persistent problems associated with irregular attendance in elementary schools in the second half of the nineteenth century. Teachers found themselves engaged in a continuous battle with the twin difficulties of poor health and the vagaries of the climate since the intermittent absences which resulted from both caused problems in terms of pupil achievement and the consequent effects of an unfavourable HMI annual report on such matters as crucial grant aid; how the school was perceived; and staff morale and pay.

Ellis confirms the contention that those people most affected by the Revised Code of 1862 were the teachers since the new system appeared not only to threaten their status (which was already the subject of public criticism, and suffering from an oversupply of teachers); it also paved the way for a possible reduction in their income. The government grant, which would depend entirely on the inspector’s annual examination, was in future to be paid in full to the school managers. ‘Thus, teachers would not only have to ensure that the examination was a success, but also they would have to bargain for their wages, which reduced their security of tenure, and in effect meant that they could no longer be classified as civil servants It is likely, therefore, that the introduction of the Revised Code had a demoralising effect on the teaching profession’³⁴⁷

It was noted earlier that the Revised Code introduced the concept of a minimum number of attendances by every child as a central factor in the financial survival of a school. Each child aged upwards of six who achieved 200 attendances or

³⁴⁶ Feversham Street Higher Grade Boys’ School log book, p. 310, 13 March 1890.

³⁴⁷ Ellis, ‘Effects of the Revised Code’, pp. 1-2.

more was put forward for annual examination and was capable of earning a grant of eight shillings. Notable variances in the attendance register were required to be explained in the log book as one of those facts that 'may require to be referred to at a future time', and no doubt many head teachers saw the log book as a useful means of attempting to win the support of a sympathetic HMI as he leafed through the pages of both records. The incidence of ill-health and the state of the weather are therefore recorded with monotonous regularity in school log books since both were intrinsic features of classroom life.

Pallister states that before the introduction of school records teachers and school inspectors in the middle of the nineteenth century would have had little or no idea about why children were absent from school. He quotes an instance from the *Health of Towns Commission Report, 1844* where a study of absence in a Liverpool school found that 41 per cent of children living in cellar dwellings had been missing from school in a one year period due to sickness while only ten per cent of those living in houses had been so absent.³⁴⁸ The picture in Bradford at that time must have been a similar one. According to Jowitt 'every available space was utilised for housing and large numbers [of people] inhabited cellar dwellings which were underground, lacked ventilation, were beset by damp, and in some cases flooded.'³⁴⁹ The Bradford Woolcombers' Report of 1845 laid bare the poverty, misery, and deprivation which prevailed among the poorest people in Bradford where, in the previous year, the average life expectancy was 20 years and three months.³⁵⁰ Pallister has estimated that in about 1850 'there must have been many cases where say 10% of the children in a school were absent due to illness', and he believes it to have been one of the major reasons 'possibly underestimated at the time' for absenteeism.³⁵¹ A further point made by Pallister, but which is not supported by emotional evidence, is that parents of large families would have little incentive to send their children to school knowing full well that half of them would be dead

³⁴⁸ Pallister, 'Determinants', pp. 394-5.

³⁴⁹ *Mechanization and Misery. The Bradford Woolcombers' Report of 1845 with an Introduction by J. A. Jowitt* (Halifax: Ryburn Press, 1991).

³⁵⁰ *Bradford Observer*, 28 August 1845.

³⁵¹ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 395.

before they reached the age of fifteen, and that there would be no return on their investment in schooling.³⁵²

Locally, figures relating to infant mortality were startling. In 1844, 51 per cent of deaths in the West Riding were of children under the age of 15, while in Bradford the figure was 58 per cent.³⁵³ In the period 1871-75, exactly 50 per cent of all deaths in the Borough of Bradford were of children in the one to four age groups, and in the five years up to 1900, 26 per cent of all deaths in the registration district of Bradford involved children under the age of five.³⁵⁴ Such was the fragility of infant life in the town that many young children never reached the stage of attending school. As Thompson has pointed out, 'Bradford, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, was a very unhealthy place in which to live, and a positively dangerous place in which to be born.'³⁵⁵ A poignant gravestone in Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford immortalises the brothers Smith, four in number aged between one and seven years, who, in August 1880, 'were all cut off within one week.'³⁵⁶ When information reached the head master of St. James's Boys' School on 3 February 1873 that Albert Haggas, one of his youngest pupils, had died that morning he spoke to the boy's fellow students in the first class 'very seriously on the uncertainty of human life, and the necessity of "Remembering their Creator in the days of their youth."³⁵⁷ Similarly, Richard Pearce's death from scarlatina afforded the head master the opportunity of addressing his pupils on the solemnity of the event when he 'brought it before them as a lesson.'³⁵⁸ On another altogether more pleasant occasion he happily observed that 'Two favourites named Bouchier

³⁵² Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 394.

³⁵³ Pallister, 'Determinants', p. 394. Pallister is quoting from the *Health of Towns Commission Report, 1844*, vol 1, p. 394.

³⁵⁴ J. Jackson, 'Tragedy of the Under Fives.' *Bradford and Calderdale Chambers of Commerce Journal*, vol. 9, no. 9, (August-September 1983), pp. 22-3.

³⁵⁵ B. Thompson, 'Public Provision and Private Neglect: Public Health.' In Wright and Jowitt (eds.), *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 137-64, p. 137.

³⁵⁶ Memorial tablet, Robert Smith and family, Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford, Plot H 45, Consecrated Section.

³⁵⁷ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 322.

³⁵⁸ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 354, 26 November 1874.

returned to school after a long illness. Children & teachers are pleased to see them.³⁵⁹

The Bradford school log books contain many references to the incidence of epidemics and the deaths of pupils. That relating to the Infants' Mission School in Bramley Street, an annex of All Saints' National School, Little Horton (the two being separated geographically by the extensive and growing complex of buildings that comprised the Bradford Poor Law Union Workhouse), is typical and provides several illustrations of these occurrences:

p. 22, 12 November 1875, 'Many chn are absent suffering from scarlet fever. Three scholars have died recently from the disease.'

p. 126, 25 March 1887, 'There is much sickness, measles, whooping cough & chicken pox amongst the children.' (Scarlet fever again descended upon the school in September 1887).

p. 156, 23 August 1889, 'I visited several absentees & found fresh cases whooping cough.'

p. 198, 4 November 1892, 'Owing to sickness the numbers have decreased from an average attendance of over 160 to 112.5 (weekly). A local doctor advises that all children suffering from measles should stay away from school a month, & those from the same houses a fortnight to prevent the spread of the complaint.'

p. 275, 21 July 1898, '.... a succession of infantile complaints.'

The infantile complaints at St. James's Infants' School, Manchester Road in 1898 were whooping cough, measles and chicken pox, which persisted for several months only abating during the summer recess.³⁶⁰ At Usher Street Infants' School, scarcely a stone's throw from St. James's, the year 1893 proved to be a particularly bad one since a variety of epidemics visited the young children and played havoc with the attendances. In May measles and whooping cough were prevalent; in June scarlet fever and measles were in

³⁵⁹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 31, 4 February 1889.

³⁶⁰ St. James's Infants' School log book, p. 322, 13 May 1898.

evidence; in July mumps were found among the pupils; and in September a smallpox epidemic evidently carried off many children as it was reported that 'several staff off school attending funerals.'³⁶¹ The smallpox outbreak in Bradford in 1893 persisted for many months and caused widespread concern among the parents of boys attending Feversham Street School, the head master remarking that 'This district seems to be about the centre of [the] smallpox epidemic & several parents have sent me notes refusing to allow their children to attend.'³⁶² In October 1899, measles was again raging in the town and no fewer than fourteen children from St. James's Mixed School were confined in the Leeds Road Fever Hospital.³⁶³ These three schools, and the Mission School, Bramley Street, were located in very densely populated areas where contagious diseases were apt to spread extremely quickly among tightly packed neighbourhoods of largely back-to-back insanitary housing. Schools were breeding grounds for infectious disease, which was even more likely to become widespread where there was overcrowding, such as in Ryan Street Infants' School. In the government report on the school for the year ending 31 January 1896 (which was entered in the log book two months later), the School Board was severely criticised for having allowed such a situation to develop unchecked. 'My Lords observe that there were no less than 493 infants on the books at the close of the school year, the accommodation being sufficient for an average attendance of 344 only.'³⁶⁴ In March 1898 the number on the registers had reached 501, and in July 1899 the head mistress observed 'much sickness amongst the children', and it was considered expedient to extend the summer vacation by two weeks 'owing to the prevalence of various infectious diseases in the city.'³⁶⁵

In 1886 the School Board, despairing of the high incidence of pupil absence due to transmissible diseases, wrote to the town council 'with an expression of the hope that the Council will give full attention to the health department in their

³⁶¹ Jackson and Honey, *Usher Street School*, p. 6.

³⁶² Feversham Street Boys' School log book, p. 340, 12 May 1893.

³⁶³ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 208, 24 October 1899.

³⁶⁴ Ryan Street Infants' School log book, vol. 1, pp. 448-9, 31 March 1896.

³⁶⁵ Ryan Street Infants' School log book, vol. 2, p. 16, 21 July 1899.

duties.³⁶⁶ Whether such an approach had any positive effect is not recorded in the minutes. Bradford town council as a whole made slow progress in the fields of health and sanitary provision during the Victorian period.³⁶⁷ The Board made a further appeal to the town council in 1897, the year in which the borough was elevated to city status, requesting it to make 'notifiable' to the medical officer of health infectious diseases with a view to improving attendance.³⁶⁸

In September 1893, the School Board, under pressure from local doctors, engaged Dr. James Kerr as Medical Superintendent of Schools, the first such appointment outside London. Although his responsibilities were strictly defined and limited to the physical well-being of the scholars in the Board schools there was one duty which called upon him to 'examine children who are said to be physically unfit to attend school, and make out certificates.' In the opinion of Counsel, this obligation extended to every child in Bradford irrespective of which school he or she claimed to go to 'for the purpose of enforcing attendance of children at some school in the district and the examination of such children to see if their sickness prevents or excuses attendance.'³⁶⁹ Steedman says of Kerr, 'His work in the inspection and categorisation of elementary-school children helped to evolve a highly medicalised view of working-class childhood, in which the contagious diseases spread in closely packed and poorly ventilated classrooms, and the dirty state of children's bodies, were established as the indices of deprivation and impoverishment.'³⁷⁰

There can be no doubt that James Kerr and Margaret McMillan were like-minded and supported one another in their relentless campaigns to improve and promote the well-being of Bradford's poor children in particular. During her membership of the School Board, McMillan, as shown earlier, championed a number of innovative methods which were designed to improve the health and welfare of local children. 'She advocated, among other measures, the extension of medical inspection of schools, the provision of clinics, school baths, school feeding, nursery schools and open-air schools.' Her rationale was 'to make the

³⁶⁶ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 3, p. 58, 24 August 1886.

³⁶⁷ Thompson, 'Public Provision', pp. 137-64.

³⁶⁸ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 4, p. 321, 17 February 1897.

³⁶⁹ BSB, *Report 1891-94*, pp. 109-12.

³⁷⁰ Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 46.

people of Bradford see that far too many children were grievously afflicted and in such a state that reasonable education was impossible for them.'³⁷¹ About 1899, Dr Kerr (who left Bradford in 1902 to take up the post of Medical Officer of Health under the London School Board) and McMillan pioneered probably the first full-scale school medical inspection in the country when 285 girls at Usher Street Board School were examined in detail to assess their general state of health and cleanliness. Unfortunately, the school log book makes no mention of this important innovative venture which paved the way for the extension and promotion of such schemes as those referred to above.³⁷² The underlying benefit, from the School Board's perspective, was a gradual improvement in overall attendance. None the less, an average attendance of 84.52 per cent among Bradford's school children at the close of the Edwardian era was perhaps disappointing. In the year ending March 1910, the Elementary Education Sub-Committee attributed the joint causes of 'infectious diseases and inclement weather' to having a detrimental effect on the figure.³⁷³

When illness and disease were less in evidence the weather inevitably took the lead in reducing the numbers in attendance. In the middle of November 1866, for example, the West Riding experienced some of the heaviest and most persistent rainfall in living memory. Such was the deluge that a plateau of low lying land along the course of the River Aire between Shipley and Apperley Bridge, a few miles to the north of Bradford, was subjected to an unprecedented torrent of fast moving water that caused the collapse of a huge and lengthy railway viaduct spanning the river. Bradford town centre was also very badly affected by the surge of water, one head master making reference to the unusual spectacle. 'In consequence of the flood in the town the attendance was rather smaller; several children living in Thornton Rd had to be taken home in cabs.'³⁷⁴ As might be expected, the incidence of absence during the winter months was far greater than during the other seasons. A very heavy snow storm on 5 March 1886 reduced the morning attendance at Ryan Street Infants'

³⁷¹ *Education in Bradford*, pp. 127-8.

³⁷² Several years later Dr. Kerr wrote a brief account of this inspection. See *Education in Bradford*, p. 128.

³⁷³ *Education Committee Report, 1909-10*, p. 52.

³⁷⁴ Eastbook Wesleyan School log book, p.124, 16 November 1866.

School to 12, whereas the previous week's average attendance had been 169.7.³⁷⁵ Of course, the weather was often unpredictable at any time of the year, but in the vast majority of cases the entry 'numbers low due to weather' is the bald and only explanation for irregularity. However, entries along the lines of 'Numbers very low. Most of day children away owing to school being so very cold'³⁷⁶ was an occasional and perhaps not altogether unsympathetic complaint made by head teachers. They tended to be less understanding when during the cold winter months parents kept their children at home until the arrival of milder spring temperatures.³⁷⁷ The underlying reason for absence among many pupils during wintertime appears to have been caused by a combination of the inclemency of the weather and (as a consequence of poverty) by the lack of warm clothing.

5.6 Amusements and other Distractions.

In what he refers to as 'challenges to classroom coercion', Humphries describes the habitual problem of 'opportunistic truancy'.

Opportunistic truancy was an occasional form of resistance practised by many working-class children who, several times each year, would attempt to abscond from school to play in the fields and on the beaches, to poach, to go to fairs, markets and processions and, later, to swimming baths and picture palaces.³⁷⁸

In the Victorian elementary schools of Bradford opportunistic truancy was endemic and something of a traditional pastime among many children when local or visiting attractions were more inviting than the classroom. Feasts, fairs, and tides, for example, proved to be the familiar reasons for absence, and there were occasions when head teachers had no choice but to close their schools because attendance was abysmally low. 'Holiday this afternoon owing to "Bowling tide" which caused the absence of so many that it was not considered

³⁷⁵ Ryan Street Infants' School log book, vol.1, p. 254, 5 March 1886.

³⁷⁶ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 229, 3 January 1871.

³⁷⁷ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p.129, 21 January 1867.

³⁷⁸ S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p. 63

advisable to open the school.³⁷⁹ Long-established events such as the Bowling and Horton Tides, the Bradford Fair, and the Barkerend Feast were doubtless eagerly anticipated by children of all ages, and particularly half timers, as a welcome distraction from the mundane routine and simpler domestic pleasures, but were roundly condemned by the teachers: 'These local fairs are a nuisance.'³⁸⁰; 'The abominable "Manchester Road Tide" has played sad havock (*sic*) with the attendance this week.'³⁸¹; 'Holiday in the afternoon (Barkerend Feast). This, I am glad to say, finishes the series of Feasts, which continue during 3 months in the year.'³⁸²

It was not only heavily populated, industrial Bradford that celebrated local traditions. In rural areas such as the outlying townships of Idle and Thackley, a few miles to the north of Bradford, the annual feast was an event of great significance in the local calendar. This greatly displeased the head master of the Idle Independent Day School who observed on Monday, 12 September 1870 that many children remained at home to help prepare for 'the all-engrossing event – a fortnight hence – the Idle Feast.' A week later he considered whether to close the school as numbers plummeted. 'This arises from an ancient custom prevalent in Idle of allowing the children to remain at home on 'Beef Monday' to run the round of the butchers' shops to witness the slaying of the beasts for Feast week's consumption.' He decided to keep his school open 'so as not to countenance such a barbarous usage.'³⁸³ It was a similar story at Raw Nook National School in the village of Low Moor on Bradford's southern perimeter where the nearby Wibsey Fair necessitated the closure of the school for two days each year.³⁸⁴

There is nowhere in the log books any indication that parents discouraged their offspring from attending feasts, fairs, and tides. They too were often keen to participate and in doing so incurred the censure of 'the advocates of thrift [who]

³⁷⁹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 239, 16 August 1869.

³⁸⁰ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 275, 10 October 1870.

³⁸¹ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 462, 1-3 October 1883.

³⁸² Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 211, 12 October 1869.

³⁸³ Quoted in J. Jackson, *Thackley School 1884-1984* (Bradford: Privately published, 1984), p. 8.

³⁸⁴ J. Jackson, *Raw Nook School 1874-1974* (Bradford: Privately published, 1974), p. 3.

decried the expense and extravagance that working-class families incurred to enjoy them.³⁸⁵ The Bradford School Board Attendance Committee appears to have turned a blind eye to the matter of truancy on these long-established festival occasions realising, perhaps, that it was an impossible task to overcome the irresistible attraction and influence of local customs. Only once apparently (in 1895) did it approach the town council on the subject, and only then with a request that it take steps to ban the 'smaller' tides.³⁸⁶

Public parades through the streets of Bradford's were not to be missed. 'On assembling the children at 9 o'clock, found only about one sixth of the usual number. This was owing to a procession passing close to the school so a holiday was given for the day.'³⁸⁷ When, on 24 April 1896, 'Lord' George Sanger's famous travelling circus visited Bradford, and the animals were led in procession through the centre of the town, the occasion was recorded in several log books because of its adverse effect on attendances. Some schools, anticipating that numbers would be low, gave a half holiday. And when Barnum and Bailey's Circus - 'The Greatest Show on Earth' - performed in Bradford on Monday, 19 September 1898 both Board and Church schools closed their doors realising that such a compelling attraction would inevitably draw the pupils.

Among many unjustifiable absences from school were those which included boys who stayed at home on the pretext of being ill (something that was 'frequently done'), yet were found to be working in the mill³⁸⁸; half timers 'playing at the mill', possibly because it was 'very hot in school'³⁸⁹; a trip by a number of pupils to Leeds to see the Prince of Wales perform the opening of an art exhibition³⁹⁰; the opening of the Caledonia Street Bridge to provide access across rail lines³⁹¹; a visit to the Australian Cricket Match³⁹²; the Newsboys' Trip

³⁸⁵ Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family*, p. 129.

³⁸⁶ BSB, SAC, *Minutes*, vol. 4, p. 195, 24 September 1895.

³⁸⁷ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 139, 23 April 1867.

³⁸⁸ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 1, p. 50, 15 January 1864.

³⁸⁹ St. James's Girls' School log book, p. 218, 21 July 1870

³⁹⁰ St. Andrew's Boys' School log book, p. 140, 19 May 1868.

³⁹¹ St. James's Infants' School log book, p. 126, 6 October 1876.

³⁹² Feversham Street Higher Grade Boys' School log book, p. 269, 25 June 1888.

to Skegness³⁹³; and the witnessing of 'demonstrations' (probably meaning parades) by the Miners and Good Templars.³⁹⁴ A distraction (if it can be so designated) of a novel nature, which may well have caused his head master to be lost for words, was that proffered by Watkin Mawson. Explaining precisely the reason for his very lengthy absence from school, the boy stated that he had been in Leeds for above a year 'getting his eyes twisted straight.'³⁹⁵

³⁹³ St. James's Mixed School log book, p. 181, 13 July 1897.

³⁹⁴ Eastbrook Wesleyan School log book, p. 291, 29 June 1874 and 6 July 1874.

³⁹⁵ St. James's Boys' School log book, vol. 2, p. 15, 12 December 1887.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

It is suggested that Bradford should be looked upon as a case worthy of special attention in the study of Victorian elementary school attendance for several reasons: the phenomenal growth of the town during the nineteenth century; its rapid rise to prominence as the centre of the world's worsted textile industry; the requirement for and reliance upon a sustained supply of child labour which created the largest half-time system in the country; and the forces which struggled against the odds to secure compliance with new legislation to facilitate universal attendance in school. Fortuitously, there is a reservoir of very good documentary material at the disposal of the dedicated researcher.

In the apparent absence of a detailed explanation or analysis of the rationale for the school log book, or any work on the study of its integrity, it is hoped that this thesis will provide an introduction which might stimulate further detailed studies about questions that may arise from an appraisal of the document. It has been intimated in this thesis that the head teacher might on occasion have used the log book as an instrument to present a view designed to invoke a favourable report from HM Inspector of Schools. It was after all a journal kept by one person who may have seen fit to present it less as a factual record and more of a mechanism in which to find expression for his or her biased or intensely personal viewpoint. This requires further investigation.

The underlying purpose of this thesis is to recognise and to promote the historical value of the hitherto largely neglected Victorian school log book as an important research tool for the social, cultural, economic, local, and educational historian. It has sought to achieve this by the example of exploring the singular subject of elementary school attendance in the rapidly expanding urban environment of Bradford in the latter part of the nineteenth century, where local industry competed with the classroom for the attention of the child. Faced with the call for half-time employment at one level and demands imposed by the

ubiquitous Revised Code at another level, together with other critical determinants, this thesis has highlighted the subject from the perspective of local head teachers. It has made a detailed examination of their unique individual records over a forty-year period to reveal the struggles that they encountered on a daily basis in the enduring battle to achieve and maintain acceptable levels of pupil attendance.

It is hoped that this study will stimulate greater awareness and appreciation of the underused school log book as a unique source of research material across a wide range of disciplines; contribute significantly to existing academic research into the study of habitually poor pupil attendance; and encourage further research into the subjects discussed to understand better the reasons why elementary school attendance was a prolonged major concern in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and especially so in Bradford.

A very thorough and rigorous examination of the log books used in this thesis has highlighted the significant problem of irregular attendance among pupils. It was a countrywide difficulty, but acute and manifest in Bradford where astonishing year on year growth in population was inextricably linked with continuous and rapid expansion in textile manufacturing, which demanded a plentiful supply of child labour. Bradford had by far proportionately the highest number of half-time pupils in the country and the log books reflect the extraordinary additional challenges brought about by that dubious distinction. Teachers, School Board members and officials, and the Magistracy were engaged in a never ending game of cat and mouse to ensure that local bye-laws and statutory measures compelling attendance were observed as children, invariably assisted by their parents in pursuit of enhancing the family income, contrived with unceasing determination to evade the force of the law. It has been shown that the log books reflect, in an often very personal way, myriad experiences of the trials and tribulations of the Victorian classroom to provide the historian with a unique first-person source of information to further enhance existing research material.

It has been demonstrated in this thesis that the Bradford school log books, together with statistical data for the period 1863 to 1903, illustrate that

elementary school attendance was an ongoing problem and that sustained efforts to improve the situation were surprisingly slow to materialise and met with only limited and mixed success. Following the Elementary Education Act of 1870, attendance figures did begin to rise, but far more slowly than might have been anticipated after the introduction of local compulsion in 1873. In 1903, when the School Board system was abolished, attendance stood at almost 86 per cent in Bradford, and while the Board in its final report expressed itself pleased with this achievement, in truth it fell far short of that which was desirable. The familiar reasons for bad and irregular attendance in Bradford, although in some instances less in evidence than before, were still around at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact, half-time attendance, one of the main protagonists, rose significantly in 1903.

In addition to the half-time question, it has been shown that a variety of reasons continued to have significant influence on attendance. Poverty, which persisted among working-class families throughout the period under review, unquestionably played a considerable part and was linked inextricably to perhaps the most important issue - the attitude of parents to the new phenomenon of universal education and compulsion, and one that head teachers frequently touch upon. The log books confirm the hypothesis that parents who had experienced little or no education themselves were unlikely to realise any tangible benefits that their offspring might derive from it. The majority resented their children's loss of earnings, a grievance compounded by the fees which they had to pay for attendance at school. When, in 1891, fees were abolished the Bradford School Board stated that the move had no effect on improving attendance, and one head teacher expressed his belief that parents appreciated nothing that was free. Even those who did see some value in education often failed to understand the importance of regular attendance. These interlinked issues would doubtless benefit from further research and analysis.

Official reports backed up by mortality statistics show that Bradford was a very unhealthy place in which to be born and raised. Deaths of local school children together with the high incidence of recurring serious diseases are recorded in the log books with monotonous regularity. The threat of illnesses of a type long

forgotten in this country (typhoid, diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever) was ever present and quite able to decimate pupil numbers. The student of Victorian infant mortality would be well advised to consider the log book as a primary source of vital information on that subject.

Adverse weather conditions were closely associated with poverty and illness. An ill-shod and poorly clothed child was kept away from school at the appearance of heavy rain or snow or in times of extreme cold. And local fairs, menageries and the like were such a huge attraction from the mundane routine of daily existence that the 'Board men' faced an impossible task in fulfilling their duty to rein in the truants. Their employers, and teachers, undoubtedly realised the futility of any action at such times. But this conjecture requires close examination.

The closure in 2004 of the prestigious Museum of the History of Education at Leeds University is regrettable, but tends to suggest that interest in educational history has diminished in recent times. This hypothesis was highlighted by Peter Mandler who, in his presidential address to the Royal Historical Society in November 2014, reflected on Britain's transition to a mass education system at secondary and tertiary level over the last one hundred years, but especially since World War II. Mandler recounted his conversation with a colleague, who commented, 'History of Education? Really? Well, there goes your career.' Mandler felt that those (perhaps popular) comments 'betray a widespread sense in our discipline that the history of education is a dull or marginal or dead-end subject.' He condemned such views as misguided:

Especially for the most modern periods, education is surely one of the most important fields of enquiry, for political, social, cultural, even intellectual history. It is one of the principal sites of socialisation – the most important site outside the family. It is one of the places where the state enters most regularly and directly into the lives of its citizens. It helps to make us whom we are. It is therefore tightly enmeshed with questions that everyone acknowledges lie at the heart of our contemporary historical agenda – questions of class and gender, of national and other

group identities, of social reform and social mobility, of the relationship between state and civil society. For the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it plays roughly the role that religion played in the preceding centuries.³⁹⁶

With the approach of the 150th anniversary of Forster's Elementary Education Act in 2020 it will be interesting to see whether that milestone will serve to promote the re-emergence of academic research and scholarly literature concerning the history of education in the United Kingdom. Certainly there would be plenty of scope for making use of the school log book, and for looking closely at the question of elementary school attendance in the nineteenth century.

³⁹⁶ P. Mandler, 'Educating the Nation I: Schools.' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (2014), pp. 5-28, p. 5.

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